

Some Successful AAS Projects

Innovation was to the forefront when these projects were developed.

Regional Arts Development Officer, Lower North Coast

The mid North Coast Regional Arts Development Officer project for the five local government areas in the Lower AAS sub-region was funded in 1993. The project was designed to support local councils and foster and encourage arts development throughout the region. This pick-up project is now funded through the Arts Council NSW Ltd.

Public Transport Development

Northern Rivers Social Development Council auspiced a Public Transport Development Officer project in 1994. This project was to develop an effective, integrated and accessible public transport service to meet the needs of the growing population throughout the Upper North Coast sub-region. Several transport forums were held. These highlighted the transport disadvantage of the area. Some councils adopted public transport advisory committees to assist in developing better services in their local area.

In 1997 the Transport Development Officer coordinated an expression of interest from the region for NSW Ageing and Disability Department Transport Demonstration Projects. The region secured nearly one-third of the available funding. This limited term funding will enable transport operators to trial new services such as hail and ride, local town services and better transport coordination. Other innovative services include a Share Ride Taxi Service in the Tweed Valley.

Shared Vision Wula Wula Nja

Koori workers in Government agencies in the Richmond district have developed this project. They have collaborated with the Gungil Jindabah Indigenous Peoples Centre at Southern Cross University and the Premier's Department Regional Coordination Project with agreement from Bundjalung Elders.

Wula Wula Nja is designed to promote constructive linkages of programs and networks between agencies and Aboriginal communities and to develop alternate strategies of service delivery to meet the needs of Koori people. The goal of the project is to develop a coordinated approach to work practice and management that involves Koori communities as an equal partner. An anticipated outcome for the project is to provide a model for a holistic approach to service delivery to Aboriginal communities.

Ewingar South Tabulam Hall

Following community meetings in 1990, residents of this area, 130 kilometres north-west of Grafton, decided to construct a community centre. Regular fund raising events were held each year. The Fletcher brothers donated a two hectare parcel of land. An AAS grant of \$20 000 contributed to the project.

In 1996 a New Work Opportunities grant was obtained. Volunteers worked under supervision to construct a unique building using local timbers and soils. The hall was officially opened on 21 September 1996. This facility will provide long term benefits and a focal point for social and recreation needs of a remote community.

Support for North Coast Planning and Housing

Major initiatives for the North Coast were highlighted by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Craig Knowles, during his recent visits to Lismore and Grafton.

Housing was a major focus of the visit to Grafton, during which time Mr Knowles:

- opened the Iluka Glade Retirement Units, a \$1 million joint project with the Anglican Church, the Department of Housing Hostel and Care Program, and DUAP's Office of Community Housing
- announced extra funding of \$208 207 for a \$1.2 million community housing development for Italian aged people in Lismore, bringing the Government contribution for the project to more than \$1 million
- said the Government would build 83 new homes in the Tweed Shire over the next two years, a Government commitment of \$11.2 million.



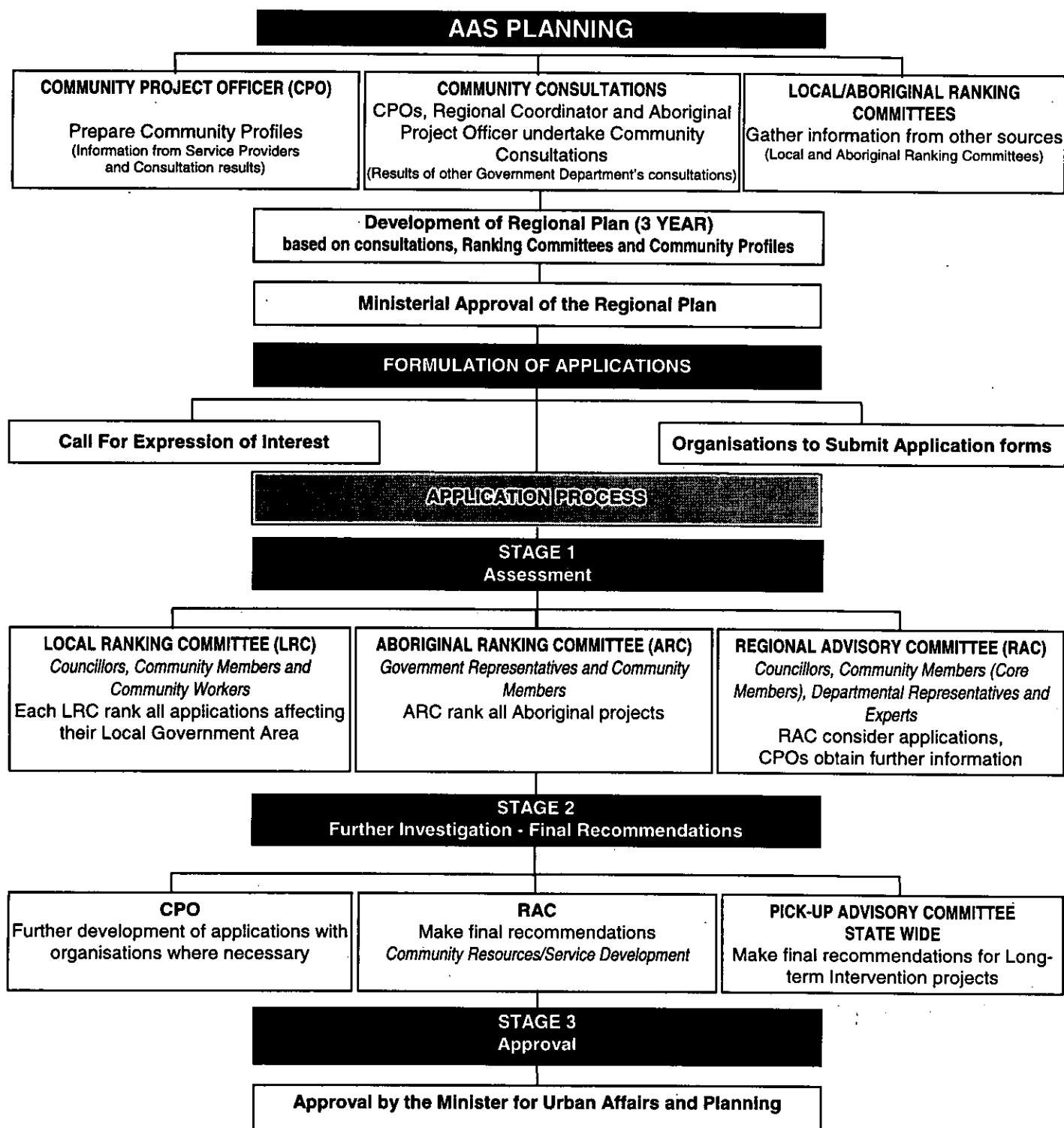
The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Craig Knowles with North Coast Area Assistance Scheme Coordinator Jane Markotsis at the opening of the Iluka Glade Retirement Units in Iluka.

Mr Knowles also announced the toughening of the Good Neighbour Policy, geared to ensuring all public housing tenants live in peace, free from harassment, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour.



Shawn Phillips, Public Transport Development Officer with members of the Public Transport Workers Group which received a \$141 500 grant in 1994-1995.

Proposed Area Assistance Scheme Funding Process



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Area Assistance Scheme 1991-1998

Adding Value to the North Coast

The NSW Government's Area Assistance Schemes have a new commitment to better directed, more effective support for regional community needs and priorities.

The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Craig Knowles, said the new emphasis would enable the AAS to be more responsive and to better serve the North Coast region.

"The application process has also been simplified. It comes with an information kit, is easier to fill in and will help applicants to think their projects through," Mr Knowles said.

"This year, \$5.4 million will be granted to community organisations or local councils in six regions experiencing significant growth and change."

The Scheme aims to:

- help local communities and regions to examine community needs in their area, and develop ways to met those needs
- support community development and the integrated provision of services in regions experiencing social stress, or undergoing rapid population growth or change
- promote the development and co-ordination of social services
- encourage co-operation between Government agencies, councils, community organisations and the private sector to make better use of existing resources in the areas of planning and service delivery
- develop, implement and manage strategies which address identified issues.



Upper North Coast Community Project Officers with the Regional Coordinator attending a Regional Interagency meeting in Bangalow. L to R Back: Robyn Masters, Tricia Shantz, Jenni Funari, Laurie Bonner. L to R Front: Ruth Ormella, Jane Markotsis, Tony McAteer.

A Wide Range of Projects

On the North Coast between 1992 and 1998, the AAS funded 567 projects to a total amount of \$5 330 380. These projects are diverse, with a mix of small one-off capital grants and a range of time-limited and long term pick-up programs.

North Coast AAS initiatives include:

- Social Impact Assessment seminars
- youth forums
- "Shared Vision" Wula Wula Nja pilot program designed to produce a coordinated approach to issues concerning Aboriginal communities in the Northern Rivers region.

There are three types of grants which may be funded through AAS. They are currently referred to as capital, time-limited and pick-up.

The proposed categories are:

Community Resources (capital) to increase and improve facilities needed for social and community development.

Community and Service Development (time-limited, 1/4 years). A proportion of the budget will be allocated to funding development and pilot projects up to four years duration.

Long-term Intervention (pick-up) is limited to a State-wide allocation of \$450 000 per annum for new projects. These projects are initiated by the AAS and transferred to the administration of an appropriate State Government agency after two years. Funding enhancement to continue the project within the Non-Government Organisation program of the pick-up agency is then made available by the Treasury.

The Regional Coordinator

A Regional Coordinator coordinates the operations of the AAS in different regions. The AAS operates in six regions of the State: the North Coast; Macarthur; Illawarra; Central Coast; Hunter; and Western Sydney.

A new Regional Coordinator was appointed to the North Coast AAS in September 1997. Jane Markotsis was formerly the Community Project Officer (CPO) for the Clarence Valley. Jane has experience in the development and management of community services.

The Regional Coordinator has an important role in social and strategic planning, and the development of forums and initiatives within a region. The role also involves managing all aspects of the Scheme including policy, administration, evaluation, budgets and financial accountability.

Aboriginal Community Project Officer

The North Coast AAS has funded a number of Aboriginal projects since its inception. However, the Aboriginal community and organisations were not sufficiently aware of the existence of the AAS and how it could assist them.

To promote awareness of the Scheme, and to enable more in depth consultation with Aboriginal communities regarding their needs, an Aboriginal CPO position was created in February 1997. This position was filled by Janelle Ellingwood.

The role of the Aboriginal CPO is to:

- support and assist Aboriginal community groups and groups involved with providing services to Aboriginal communities
- develop and maintain links and networks to assist with the coordination of Aboriginal services
- assist CPOs in local councils in their dealings with Aboriginal communities and projects
- convene the Aboriginal Ranking Committee which consider projects which address Aboriginal priorities and needs.

Proposed Changes

Since its inception in Western Sydney in 1979, the AAS has been regularly

reviewed by independent consultants. A review of the AAS by Ernst & Young and Purdon Associates Pty Ltd, consultants, was completed in 1997.

The consultants proposed a range of options to enhance the effectiveness of the AAS. This review endorsed the innovative nature of the AAS and its ability to fund a diverse range of projects, and meet the broad aims and objectives. One of the options was to retain the basic features of the AAS while refocusing on its distinctive, original and valued role in each region.

As part of the on going process of addressing community needs, as well as improving accountability of the AAS, further changes are proposed. The purpose of these changes is to improve the quality of funded projects; increase the level of transparency in decision making at all levels; improve the efficiency in process and promote the AAS as a model of good practice.

North Coast Regional Priorities

One of the recent changes is to allow each region to develop its own priorities for funding. The priorities for the North Coast AAS for 1998 are for projects which address:

- cultural and cross-cultural tolerance
- the impact of a highly mobile and transient population
- misuse of alcohol and other drugs
- access to appropriate accommodation
- services and facilities for isolated or newly established communities.

Policy and Procedure Guidelines

AAS is inviting input on new Policy and Procedure Guidelines that provide direction for AAS planning and administration.

The Guidelines are being developed in consultation with local councils and the community. For further information contact your CPO or the Regional Coordinator.

The Community Project Officers

AAS relies heavily on the input of local government. Each local council involved in AAS employs a CPO who administers AAS in their local government area.

Councils receive a subsidy from the Department towards employment of CPOs. As part of their duties, the CPOs:

- contribute to AAS planning and priority setting
- assist the community to identify needs and formulate applications for funding
- process applications for funding
- oversee local ranking committees which assess applications received
- provide advice to the Regional Advisory Committees on local needs and priorities
- monitor funded projects.

In addition, CPOs have an important role in community development and social planning in their local area. For example, a CPO would assist local community groups to access other Government programs and services.

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