

THE COMMUNITY BUILDERS PROGRAM

HANDBOOK

'A Grassroots leadership development program supporting regional residents to better understand and build their communities and local communities'

An Initiative of the South Australian Office of Regional Development

*'Never doubt that a small group of committed
citizens can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has'
(Margaret Mead)*

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Disclaimer

Whilst the information in this Handbook has been collated and expressed in good faith, no guarantee can be given for total accuracy. Secondly, the contents do not necessarily take into account all the factors which needed to be considered before implementing and facilitating a Community Builders Program. Accordingly, the Handbook should be used in conjunction with Facilitator training and with indepth research of the local and regional community and other technical resources.

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Part A

PROGRAM HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, CONTENT AND PROCESSES

Introduction

The Community Builders Program is a unique six month action learning process which identifies, encourages and empowers regional residents to become involved in discovering and building their community and its economy. Its aims include -

- promoting pro-active and positive attitudes towards improving the quality of life in regional communities,
- providing the necessary information, skills, tools, motivation, confidence and passion to manage change in regional communities,
- encouraging new thinking about ways to better support and nurture economic, employment and social development at local and regional levels,
- stimulating collaboration between communities and creating a peer support network and friendship links across a region.

It represents a most exciting and innovative approach to building community economic leadership in regional South Australia.

The Community Builders Program originated in rural Nebraska, USA. In 1992, Dr Robert Manley, a noted Nebraskan historian, developed a program for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development which aimed to support Nebraskan rural communities develop a positive future. His "Community Builders" program was built upon the following assumptions:

- the key to economic success in rural communities is tied directly to investment in rural economic leadership,
- while agriculture is, and will remain an important part of Nebraska's economy, it need no longer hold life and death power over a community's economy,
- the need to bring together community residents who were excited about helping make things happen in their communities, and
- the importance of community cooperation, of communities beginning to interconnect, discover each other and work together to achieve common economic goals.

Dr Manley also identified the two types of leadership within communities - formal leaders representing a constituency, and those community 'mover shakers' often without formal links but those people who make things happen within communities. He believed communities needed both types of leadership. In particular he advocated the need for special leadership development experiences for the later group - whom he called 'community builders'.

'It isn't enough for a town to have good leadership. Communities also must have people - Community Builders - who vigorously encourage and support a wide range of activities which benefit the community. These builders aren't self serving. They're interested in improving and perpetuating their communities. Find a community with both leaders and builders and you'll find a community that works.' (Dr Robert Manley)

From 1992, an increasing number of Nebraska's rural and regional communities opted for participation in Community Builders. In early 1996, Peter Kenyon of the Centre for Small Town Development, as part of a study of rural economic and leadership development initiatives in the United States, identified its possible relevance to regional Australia. This was confirmed later that year, when members of an Australia regional development study tour to Nebraska recommended the implementation of Community Builders in rural Western Australia.

In 1997, 170 rural residents from 50 rural communities in the Greater Southern Region of Western Australia participated in 'the Community Builders Initiative'. Support was provided through the 'Doing More with Agriculture Program' (Office for the Minister of Primary Industries and Fisheries) and the Great Southern Development Commission.

The Community Builders Initiative in Western Australia has now grown to involve over 120 rural communities. Variations of the Community Builders model have also now been implemented in Mackay in Queensland (through the efforts of the Mackay Regional Council for Social Development) and the Yarra Ranges in Victoria (through the efforts of JobsEast, an Area Consultative Committee).

In 2000, the South Australia Office of Regional Development - in partnership with other spheres of government - Family and Community Services and Local Government Association of South Australia - instigated a Community Builders Program in four regional areas of the State. This will involve communities in the Eyre Peninsula, The Fleurieu, the Flinders Ranges, and the Mid Murray. The Regional Development Council has endorsed implementing a three year Community Builders Program in South Australia.

Program Description

A cluster of communities constitutes the geographical basis for a Community Builders program. Between six and ten communities create a cluster, each being represented by a Community Team of two to five members. A trained Facilitator helps coordinate and manage each cluster.

Program elements

I Residential 24 hour workshop retreat

This event initiates the process and enables participants to get to know each other, develop an understanding of the concepts of community and economic development, and determine learning priorities which the cluster wants to focus on during its six month life.

II Monthly workshop days

Participants meet together monthly over a six month period, with monthly locations rotating around participating communities. These 'Cluster Muster' meetings usually include a study tour of the host community, informal sharing over a meal, a resource information session and a practical workshop experience focussing in an identified learning priority.

III Community audit experience

Each Community Team undertakes a series of simple audit exercises using a variety of tools that facilitate a better understanding of their community and its assets and opportunities.

IV Community team meetings

Between monthly workshop meetings, community teams meet in their own community for two hours to focus on their Community Builders experience and its relevance and application locally.

V Community project participation

Each Community Team selects and implements a project within their community or region.

VI Additional skill development

Throughout the program, participants are connected to other skill development opportunities.

VII Special events

The opportunity for a number of special occasions is integrated into the life of Community Builders. For example, on 'Adelaide Day' to meet local members of Parliament and key government agency personnel, a graduation event, and access the events and conferences organised through the Office of Regional Development.

More indepth information on each element is provided below as part of the Program Content and Process section.

Program philosophy

The Community Builders Program in South Australia shares the initial assumptions guiding the Nebraska model (outlined above), and has adopted similar objectives. The aims of the South Australia Program include:

- promoting pro-active and positive attitudes towards improving the quality of life in regional communities,
- providing the necessary information, skills, tools, motivation, confidence and passion to manage change in regional communities,
- encouraging new thinking about ways to better support and nurture economic, employment and social development at the local and regional levels,
- stimulating collaboration between communities and creating a peer support network and friendship links across a region.

Key principles

The structures and processes of the South Australian Community Builders Program are built on the following key principles:

- regional economic development begins with rural community development,
- the key to economic success in regional communities is tied directly to investment in rural economic leadership,
- the development of positive 'can do' self reliant attitudes is fundamental to positive community change,
- most answers for the challenges of economic development can be found in the local area,
- local residents are best suited to define what economic development is suitable for their community,
- economic development leadership is enhanced by doing economic development,
- it is possible for communities within a region to collaborate rather than to view each other as rivals.

Program strengths

The Community Builders Program is a community and economic development leadership experience. Results from elsewhere (national and international) highlight that the Program has the following potential strengths:

- the action learning nature of the program structure and processes,
- program flexibility to evolve depending on local needs, desires and opportunities,
- the strong community development focus, and commitment to the power of the 'bottom up' action,
- the peer networking and mentoring that emerges,
- the program expectation to learn about one's community, and become involved in building its future,
- low cost.

Potential benefits for program participants

National and international experience shows that the potential benefits for Program participants include:

- a better understanding of one's community and region, and what is needed to build a positive regional future,
- development of a knowledge base and personal skills to be more effective in community and economic development,
- an appreciation of the wide range of strategies

'We must continuously work to reduce the height and thickness of the walls around communities' (Tim Borich)

Program content and processes

*'If you want to build a ship,
don't round up people to gather wood and dish out work,
but teach them the desire for the wide, endless ocean'
(Antoine de Saint -Exupery)*

The Community Builders Program is a unique action learning program, focussed within a geographical region, and based on the unique assets, opportunities and challenges of the participants' local communities and economies. Community Builders is very much about process.

While Community Builders is intended to respond in a flexible matter to local and regional needs and opportunities, national and international experience has demonstrated the vital importance of incorporating key program elements. These elements help constitute the unique action/learning nature of the Community Builders Program. The seven fundamental elements are described below.

I A residential 24 hour workshop retreat

In addition to providing participants with grounding and an understanding of the Community Builders Program and the principles and practices of community and economic development, the event also provides an excellent opportunity for 'bonding' between participants and time to collectively determine program learning priorities and arrangements. The retreat needs to allocate time for the following:

- **Demystification of the Community Builders Program**

Time is required for participants to understand fully and feel comfortable with the Community Builders Program - in particular, its program elements, processes and expectations. It is important that participants discuss, question and debate the Program. Usually, any participant withdrawal will occur following the Retreat, when the full implications of participation become apparent.

- **Team building and personal awareness activities**

The Workshop Retreat provides the opportunity for participants to 'get to know each other and themselves', including their reasons for participation and their aspirations.

Awareness and team building activities should permeate the retreat, and need to incorporate the following:

- personal introductions
 - leadership awareness exercises
 - discussion focussing on sharing information and insights about each others communities
 - self awareness and aspiration exercises
- **Demystification of concepts of community and economic development**

The Community Builders Program is fundamentally about grassroots leadership development, focussing on building greater awareness of, and involvement in, community and economic development. It is essential that the Retreat provides an opportunity to stimulate interest and understanding of both the principles and practices of community and economic development.

This should be achieved through the provision of helpful and simple definitions and frameworks (see Workshop Handouts) as well as practical examples and stories from regional communities.

It is vital that participants leave the Workshop Retreat believing in both the need for, and the possibility of, positive social and economic actions at the local and regional levels, and the ability of local people to instigate, support and manage that change.

'You can change the future of your community or you can sit back and allow whatever happens to happen. You can create your own destiny. However, the cost is high. It means organising a group of people who are willing to give of their time and energy to make things happen. It means believing in yourself and your organisation. It means putting aside individual difference to work together for the good of the community. It means working together to decide what you want for the future and then working together to make it happen. You can do it, people are doing it.' (Jack McCall, *Small Town Survival Manual*)

- **Group arrangements on future meeting arrangements and workshop topics**

Following the Workshop Retreat, participants of each Community Builders Cluster group meet monthly over the following six month period. At the Workshop Retreat, the organisational details of these day workshops and other events are agreed to, including:

- dates and times
- venues
- workshop topics/themes

Examples of workshop topics/themes can be found below in the 'Monthly Workshop Days' section.

- **Introduction to community exercises**

During the life of the Community Builders Program, Community Teams are required to undertake a series of simple audit exercises and a community project. During the Retreat, all participants receive a Community Builders Tool Kit, containing a variety of tools which can assist in undertaking these activities.

The following pages provide a program summary of a typical twenty four hour Workshop Retreat.

24 Hour workshop retreat - Possible session breakdown

Session 1 *Welcome and introductions*

- *Brief introduction to Community Builders and the Cluster*
- *Overview of 24 hour Workshop event*
- *Facilitator introduction - brief background, motivation for taking on position and explanation of role*
- *Personal introductions*

Suggested Exercise

- *Have everyone pair up with someone they do not know (sit around in room space)*
- *Pairs are asked to have a series of 3 minute conversations on such themes as:*
 - *Your life story in 90 seconds*
 - *Why have you joined Community Builders?*
 - *What are you hoping to get out of Community Builders?*
 - *Something special and positive about yourself?*
- *Each participant then introduces their partner to the rest of the group based on what was shared.*

Facilitator should note on butchers paper key points related to motivations for being in the program, expectations, special talents/resources in the group etc.

Session 2 *Opportunity to reflect in more depth on the Community Builder Experience*

- *Provision of a more indepth explanation of Community Builders*
 - *history*
 - *philosophy*
 - *components*
 - *program expectations*
- *Provision of an opportunity for participants to ask questions, make suggestions about inputs and improvements, share reservations, etc.*

Facilitators need to reinforce qualification for program certificate requires attendance at minimum attendance of four workshop days.

- *Provision of an overview of what is meant by Community and Economic Development by utilising relevant case studies and videos, eg. 'Survival and Revival in Rural Communities' and Streetlife videos.*

Session 3 *Opportunity to reflect on one's community*

- *Introduction of the tool 'Community Assessment'*
- *Community team sessions to enable reflection on their community's assets, issues, challenges and opportunities*
- *Presentation by each team to wider group*

Session 4 *Determination of Community Builder timetable*

- *Brainstorming as a group of topics/themes which participants would like to explore during the Monthly Workshop Days.*

Facilitators should use the opportunity to introduce the techniques of brainstorming - see Workshop Handout.

Facilitators should:

- *Use issues from previous session and list in Handbook as stimulator to discussion..*
- *Use dot exercise to prioritise -*
 - *Allocate 6 dots to each participant*
 - *Invite participants to spend dots on their priorities*
 - *Simple rule - any combination of spending but no more than 3 dots on one issue*
- *Once priorities are identified (some themes/topics might be grouped) determine:*
 - *best days to run workshops*
 - *best time (day programs or afternoon/evening)*
 - *host communities*
 - *allocation of themes/topics*
 - *other resource session priorities*
 - *other timetable requirements*

Session 5 *Any outstanding business/conclusions*

- *Focus on other program components -*
 - *community team meetings*
 - *audit exercises (allocate timetable requirements and tools)*
 - *community project*
- *Provision of time for any other issues/questions*
- *Conclusion with an inspirational case study/story (eg, overhead/video)*

Miscellaneous issues

- *distribution of list of all participants and contacts*
- *punctuation of workshop with a series of physical and awareness icebreakers*
- *incorporation of times to relax and share informally*
- *possible inclusion of 'host tour' activity to demonstrate how this component will operate especially if workshop is held in community that will not have a chance to host a workshop day.*

II Monthly workshop days

These monthly Workshop Days or 'cluster musters' represent the core of the Community Builders learning experience. Six events occur, with workshop locations rotating around participating communities.

As mentioned above, cluster participants determine appropriate days and timings (day meeting or afternoon/evening meeting). In Programs in other states, groups have sometimes arranged their monthly workshops to correlate with local events (for example special events, agricultural field days, race meetings etc).

The Program for the Workshop Day is determined by the host community, but needs to incorporate the following components:-

- **Study tour of the host community**

This usually involves a bus and/or walking experience, and short presentation by key local(s). It often involves the use of a local video and/or slides. The focus of the experience is on shaping the key assets, opportunities and challenges of the host community. It is important that this program segment is interactive, not just 'show and tell'. Included within the Workshop Handouts is a tool entitled "My Reactions", which provides a simple, but useful mechanism for all participants to provide some feedback to the host community on their reactions. Approximately 1-1.5 hours is allocated for this segment.

- **Informal sharing times**

Incorporated into each day are meal and refreshment times. The meal is provided by the host community - it is important to keep meals low cost and simple (for example, soup, sandwiches, cake and fruit).

- **Resource information session**

This activity aims to provide all participants with a thorough knowledge of potential resources, both technical and financial. The session formally involves a presentation by representative(s) working in such areas as the arts, youth, heritage, agriculture, business development, labour market, information technology and telecommunications, tourism, indigenous issues, etc. Normally three quarters to one hour is provided for this segment.

- **Practical workshop experience**

Each workshop day needs to incorporate a workshop experience focussed on an identified topic of skill. It is recommended that the initial set of Workshops focus on personal development skill enhancement (for example, self awareness, presentation, media and meeting skills). The second half should incorporate economic development themes. Normally at least 1.5-2 hours is allocated to this activity.

Experience with programs run elsewhere has shown that as a general rule, no more than 40% of each Workshop Day should be allocated to 'stand up' presentations. Participants' feedback has consistently requested more time for genuine workshop participation, group discussion, community sharing, case studies and group exercises.

Examples of workshop topics

- *organising for economic development*
- *getting the community to work together and excited about a change*
- *getting a group of communities to work together*
- *working with local media*
- *establishing a business retention and expansion program*
- *fostering new business development*
- *growing local businesses*
- *merchandising and marketing for rural businesses*
- *developing a local and regional tourism strategy*
- *retaining and involving young men and women*
- *being a smart consumer of outside resources*
- *attracting outside businesses*
- *developing a shared vision for the community*
- *developing a community strategic plan*
- *using telecommunications to foster development*
- *developing new leadership*
- *creating a more positive community 'first impression'*
- *doing more with agriculture*
- *creating a positive community mindset*
- *creating and sustaining partnerships and collaborative action*
- *achieving sustainable community development*
- *building community consensus and mediating conflict*
- *plugging leaks in the local community*
- *enhancing the job linking capacity of the community*
- *fostering economic development through heritage*
- *developing agri-business opportunities*

III Community audit exercises

This section focuses on 'learning by doing'. Each Community Team is required to undertake a series of audits to gain a deeper understanding of their community, its features, assets, opportunities and challenges. Audit tools are included in part C of the handbook (Community and Economic Development Tools).

IV Community team meetings

In between monthly Workshop Days, Community Teams meet at a convenient time for 1.5-2 hours in their own communities. This is often over breakfast or a cup of coffee. The purpose of the meeting is to enable participants to reflect on the Community Builders experience and its relevance and application to their community.

These meetings are also an opportunity to discuss and decide community team activities (for example, audits and key projects) and organisational arrangements related to their host Workshop Days. The Community Builders Facilitator attends the initial Community Team meetings and the last meeting, and acts as a resource person.

V Community project participation

Each Community Team identifies and implements a practical project with their communities during the life of the Community Builders Program. Selection of the project depends on participation interest and community need.

Some examples of possible Community Projects are:

- *Organisation of a youth forum*
- *Coordination of local business development workshops on themes like customer service, merchandising, marketing etc*
- *Coordination of a Business Retention and Expansion Program*
- *Organisation of a community planning evening*
- *Coordination of a community improvement project (such as painting buildings along the main street, building a toilet block etc)*
- *Coordination of a response to the loss of services within the community*

VI Additional skills development

Through participation in the Community Builders Program, Community Builders identify personal skill deficiencies and other skill enhancement opportunities. A key role of the Community Builders Facilitator is to act as a broker in creating awareness of such opportunities that exist at a regional level. The SA Office of Regional Development will regularly inform groups of training experiences.

VI Special events

During the life of the Program, a number of special events will be available for Community Builders Participants. These may include:

- 'Adelaide Day' where participants spend a day in Adelaide meeting regionally based Members of Parliament and key State Government personnel.
- Conferences, seminars or other events organised by the SA Office of Regional Development.
- A Graduation Event to celebrate participation in the Program and acknowledge this with certificates.

*'Those who have changed the Universe
have never accomplished it by changing officials,
but always by inspiring people'
(Napoleon Bonaparte)*

*'You can take my factories,
burn my buildings,
but give me my people and
I'll build the businesses right back up again'
(Henry Ford)*

Part B**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACILITATOR***A Facilitation Story*

An old Arab is dying. He calls his three sons and informs them of how they must divide his estate (a total of 17 camels). To the eldest son he bequeaths half his estate; to his second son he bequeaths one third; and to his last born son, one ninth.

After his death, the three sons meet to work out how they are to divide the 17 camels according to their Father's wishes. But they experience great problems. A stranger passes on his camel. He sees the three brothers are facing a problem and so asks if he can help. Upon hearing their situation he says, 'You need an extra camel. Here, take mine'. And so, with 18 camels the three brothers set to divide their Father's estate.

The eldest brother receives nine camels; the second receives six; and the last born receives two. But this adds up to 17, so there is one camel left.

This camel is then returned to the stranger, who rides off into the sunset, content with his performance in facilitation.

Cluster facilitation

Each cluster is allocated a Facilitator. His/her role is vital in achieving the success of the Program. A dictionary definition of "Facilitator" is 'to make easy, promote, help forward to an action or result, to remove difficulty, promote ease or readiness with aptitude, dexterity or fluency'.

The key roles of the Facilitator in the Community Builders Program are outlined below:-

Energiser

Facilitators need to create an atmosphere of energy, excitement, optimism and passion about the Program and its processes, concepts of community and economic development, and the positive difference that participants are capable of achieving within their communities and region. The Facilitator must take on the functions of encourager and cheerleader.

'Nothing was ever accomplished without enthusiasm' (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

'A leaders is a merchant of hope' (Napoleon)

Organiser

Facilitators are required to design, coordinate, adjust and organise the various components of the Community Builders Program. Tasks include participant recruitment, 24 hour residential Workshop Retreat, and monthly Workshop Days. This involves liaising with the host community, booking resources, organising input from presenters, ensuring arrangements are in place for community tour, arranging catering, and so on.

Broker

Facilitators need to link participants to experiences, models, methodologies, networks, information and resources that may be relevant to their needs, community aspirations and plans.

Group worker

Optimising the knowledge, confidence and expertise of participants is a key role of Facilitators. This includes demystifying concepts, processes and strategies; facilitating group discussions; and helping to overcome conflict and stumbling blocks. At times, Facilitators need to provide counselling support to Community Teams and individuals, particularly when facing opposition, uncertainty and conflict.

'He/she that would be a leader, must be a bridge' (Welsh proverb)

The Cultural Planning Handbook summarises well the group worker role with a statement on facilitation, namely:-

- 'designing an appropriate process to achieve the outcome desired by the group,
- observing what is happening or not happening in the group, and highlighting this to the group,
- identifying and raising problems that are holding the group back,
- challenging inappropriate behaviour,
- drawing out ideas,
- getting to the bottom of objections,
- posing new approaches for problem solving'.

Collaborator

Encouragement of collaborative efforts between participating communities is a key facet of the Community Builders process. In addition, Community Builders Facilitators are often instrumental in terms of creating collaborative efforts between a variety of government and non government agencies which service regional areas.

*'Coming together is beginning, Keeping together is progress
Working together is success' (Henry Ford)*

Ambassador

Promotion of the Community Builders philosophy, process and Program is an ongoing role of the Facilitator. This involves media liaison, dialogue with traditional leaders and stakeholder organisations and addressing local councils and service clubs.

Possible Facilitator Job Description

1. *To generate community and participant interest in the Community Builders Program through use of local and regional media, and community networking.*
2. *To recruit "community teams" to form a viable Community Builders cluster within a defined geographical area.*
3. *To organise a twenty four hour residential Workshop Retreat as a vehicle for launching the Community Builders cluster, and introducing participants to the concepts and activities of Community Builders.*
4. *To coordinate and facilitate monthly Workshop Days including:*
 - *organisation of program*
 - *briefing of resource people*
 - *liaison with host community on organisational details (for example, venue, catering, host community tour etc)*
 - *facilitate workshop experiences*
5. *To facilitate Community Team meetings between monthly workshop days, especially in terms of:*
 - *debriefing workshop learning and its application to the local community*
 - *assisting community team members to identify and implement their community audit and project responsibilities*
 - *brokering links between the ideas and aspirations of community team members and relevant resources and additional skill development experiences*

6. *In liaison with cluster reference group, to manage the budget and expenditure of the cluster allocation.*
7. *To participate fully in the Facilitator Development Program.*
8. *To liaise and report to the State Coordinator, Community Builders Program.*

Recruitment of program participants

An initial task involved in creating a Community Builders cluster is obviously the recruitment of appropriate participants, who are also willing to commit themselves to the six month process.

A Community Builder is someone who is (or has the potential to become) actively involved within their community. Often Community Builders are not 'positional' leaders (for example, Local Government elected members, Office bearer of service clubs, etc), although they may be.

Community Builders are concerned citizens and activists.

Identifying potential participants

Identifying and recruiting Community Builder Teams and participants can be a time consuming process and requires the use of a variety of methodologies, which may include:

- establishment of a support group in each community to oversee the formation of a Community Team, perhaps three/four persons drawn from key community organisations.
- development of a recruiting strategy in cooperation with the Program's State Coordinator.
- distribution of a Community Builders brochure.
- organisation of public forums to introduce the concept of Community Builders.
- communication with all key local community groups seeking nominated representatives or suggestions of local residents who would benefit and enjoy the Community Builders process.
- participation in talkback radio opportunities.
- preparation and distribution of media releases to all local newspapers and club newspapers.
- identification of community champions, influential locals willing to 'blow the trumpet' about the value of the Community Builders Program and process.

An ideal community team

Program experience elsewhere has shown that ideally a Community Team should:

- Be between two and six members (never one person)
- Be diverse in composition, in terms of age, gender, community and occupational background.
- Include young men and women.
- Include participants from business and the farming sectors.
- Include participants who are both current and potential movers and shakers in the community.

Past program participants have included:

- Community movers and shakers
- Service club office bearers
- Members of local development groups
- Farmers
- Students
- Non waged residents
- Local Government elected members and staff
- Volunteer community workers
- Community professionals such as police officers, teachers, health workers, youth workers, doctors
- Business people
- Economic development practitioners
- Tourism operators

Community collaboration

A key focus of the Community Builders Program is the fostering of collaboration and interconnections between communities. A regular discussion theme needs to relate to ways of strengthening these connection, thus ensuring 'win-win' for all communities.

*'The reason that astronomers around the world cooperate so well together
is that you cannot stand in one place and see the entire sky.
We can apply this same principle to communities, organizations and departments.'*
(anon)

Workshop facilitation

A key role for Facilitators is to maximise participant benefit from workshop session on selected topics and themes. Facilitators should not act as 'experts' on the topic/issue, but as a 'keeper of process'. A Facilitator's role is to provide a forum experience where information is presented, exchanged and reflected upon. Their role is to serve the group by keeping the discussion focussed, assisting the group consider a variety of views, approaches and ideas, and asking probing questions.

In particular, the following is important:

- Clear understanding of the groups needs and expectations regarding the theme/topic
- Familiarity with the subject
- Recruitment and briefing of appropriate resource people - such people will need to be well briefed on Community Builders, group expectations and needs, workshop format, need for maximum group participation, venue and equipment limitation, timeframe etc
- Utilisation of appropriate exercises, tools, discussion stimulation and handouts
- Utilisation of a set of ground rules

Examples of ground rules

- *check in old disputes, feuds and ideologies at the door*
- *all input is valued*
- *share 'airtime' - keep comments short, no time for sermons*
- *one person speaks at a time*
- *focus on the future - avoid dwelling on what has/has not happened in the past and who was responsible*
- *speak for yourself, not for others*
- *you can disagree, but don't personalise it, stick to the issue*
- *focus on the future*
- *everyone helps the facilitator keep the discussion moving and on track*

- Utilisation of effective questioning

- *Ask open ended questions*

Questions like 'what else haven't we considered'? and 'where to from here'? tend to encourage discussion rather than short, specific answers.

- *Ask hard questions*
Do not allow discussions to simply confirm old assumptions. Encourage participants to think critically and to re-examine their assumptions and traditional thinking. Raise points of view that have not been mentioned or seriously considered, even if you do not agree with them.
- *Ask follow up questions*
Encourage participants to reflect more deeply on the meaning of their comments. Follow up questions can be directed at individuals or the group as a whole, eg,
'what makes you say that'?
'why is that a problem'?
'how does that make you feel'?
'how did you reach that conclusion'?
'what further information do you require'?
- *Ask community focussed questions*
Use questions that encourage participants to reflect on the relevance and application of their learning to their specific communities, eg.
'how does this apply to your community'?
'how relevant is this to your community'?
'how could you share what you have learned with other members of your community'?
- Management of the discussion

Important actions include:

- draw out quiet participants
- let participants respond to one another's comments and questions
- do not allow the aggressive and talkative people to dominate
- remind participants of ground rules if being ignored
- allow for pauses and silences
- use conflict and disagreement productively
- do not tolerate put downs, name calling, stereotyping or personal attacks
- synthesise/summarise the discussion occasionally
- ensure recording of main ideas and unanswered questions
- give participants the chance to reflect on a range of views, approaches and ideas and an opportunity to come up with their own
- provide a simple evaluation task at the end of each session
- have a good time!

'I'm involved with Community Builders because the fading history of our town is too great to be ignored and the future too exciting. The camaraderie and participation with other communities makes this program so vitally stimulating' (Salli Vaughan, Kendenup, WA)