

# Managing places in mixed tenure developments – making the case for a Place Management approach

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**Getting to Yes Studio – Final Report**  
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## **Introduction**

Inner Melbourne has a critical shortage of well-located, family friendly, affordable housing. In order to explore solutions to this problem, the University of Melbourne has embarked upon a major research program, *Getting to Yes*, involving key housing researchers, as well as State and not-for-profit entities involved in the housing sector. This paper builds upon work undertaken as part of a Studio subject aligned with the broader *Getting to Yes* research program, which looked at new development models for the mixed tenure housing in a specific location in inner Melbourne. Moving beyond the initial design phase of the Studio, this paper investigates what governance and management models could best facilitate the sustainable development and delivery of more family friendly, diverse and affordable housing.

In doing so, I look to a thus far successful management model employed by a Melbourne-based registered housing provider, Urban Communities Limited. Urban Communities was the first non-government provider in Victoria to provide tenancy management services for public housing. This contract encompassed the core services of facilities management, building maintenance as well as ‘community building’ activities – collectively called ‘Place Management’ services - at a redeveloped, now mixed tenure public housing estate in Melbourne’s inner west. Subsequent to this, Urban Communities have gone on to develop and manage other mixed tenure housing, including The Nicholson, in Coburg.

In delivering on those core services of tenancy management, facilities management, building maintenance and community building collectively, Place Management appears to offer far more than traditional public and mixed tenure housing – or, indeed, typical owners corporation style - management models. Better outcomes are achieved for public housing tenants in terms of local amenity as well as community investment, and a housing product is produced that is more acceptable to the private housing market. As this management approach gains credibility, and as mixed tenure, non-government development models for social and affordable housing become more necessary, it is timely to define what is meant by Place Management, what outcomes are sought from this approach that

distinguish it from 'business as usual', and what performance standards can be used to imbed these outcomes in future management models. It is hoped that this model of mixed-tenure housing management can increase the viability of affordable housing developments, both in terms of reducing the cost to providers, as well as creating a residential environment that is attractive to private investment.

## **Report structure**

The report begins by providing a background to the *Getting to Yes* research project, followed by an overview of the housing management activities undertaken by Urban Communities and the policies driving investment in the Place Management model. Following this, the scope and type of activities that comprise the delivery of Place Management services by Urban Communities are defined, in an attempt to map out the components of Place Management.

The benefits claimed to stem from Place Management are explored, and 'benchmarking measures' suggested that could assist future affordable housing developers to assess and measure progress against these desired outcomes. In order to facilitate the development of scalable, replicable Place Management models for the type of mixed tenure development explored in the *Getting to Yes Studio*, suggested performance indicators (or KPIs) are set out, aiming to capture the value of this approach and provide clear standards for service delivery.

## **Background to Getting to Yes**

As noted above, this report builds upon work undertaken within a second-semester multidisciplinary Studio at the Melbourne School of Design, the *Getting to Yes Studio*. This Studio was itself part of a larger research project run out of the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne, '*Getting to Yes: Overcoming Barriers to Affordable Family Friendly Housing in the Central City*'. This research project is seeking to answer the question: 'What are the major barriers to creating family friendly affordable housing in central Melbourne, and how might these barriers be overcome?' The research project is responding to a perceived failure by successive state planning policies to effectively address the need to providing a range of housing options in established parts of Melbourne. One and two bedroom apartments are the norm, 'with 3+ bedroom units remaining an expensive, niche product restricted to the 'top' of buildings' (ABP 2013). The project researchers and partners have been examining what form 'family friendly' housing may take, what 'affordable' housing means in the context of the central city, and what market, industry, and institutional forces shape the current mix of housing options within the City of Melbourne's local government area (ABP 2013).

The task of the *Getting to Yes Studio* was to investigate residential design solutions for such housing at various sites in Arden-Macaulay, a post-industrial locality on the edge of North Melbourne, earmarked for large-scale residential development. The brief for the Studio, issued by Housing Choices Australia (and supported by potential development partners and financiers City of Melbourne, Places Victoria and the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation), asked students to design a mixed tenure, medium density development, and stressed the need for scalable, financially viable models for mixed tenure housing. Importantly, it was made clear that the social and affordable housing to be included within the development was to be at least partially subsidized by the sale of dwellings on the private housing market. This report focuses particularly on what management structure could be implemented in order to achieve the best outcomes in this regard.

### **Case Study: Urban Communities Limited**

The case study selected to guide this investigation is Urban Communities Limited, a Melbourne-based, registered housing association. Over the past five years, Urban Communities has been contracted by the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide 'Place Management' services on the redeveloped, mixed tenure Kensington Housing Estate. This was the first agreement of its kind in Victoria, and was particularly novel in having a single provider contract to supply services traditionally spread across multiple areas of government, including tenancy management, facilities management, building maintenance and repairs and social or community building services. It was also the first instance in Victoria of a non-government provider managing public housing tenancies. Subsequent to this, Urban Communities have gone on to partner with VicUrban to develop other mixed tenure housing developments, including The Nicholson in Melbourne's inner north (see break-out boxes overleaf).

It was the view of Urban Communities that 'to be successful, the redevelopment had to go beyond building new mixed housing and had to consider what would make the area a genuinely good place to live, where people would feel safe and connected in the community' (DPC 2010, p.4). It required a governance structure that 'combined government, developer and community' and an onsite presence to ensure that governance was delivered 'locally'. They called this approach 'Place Management', and have subsequently replicated the approach in their new mixed tenure development sites.

## URBAN COMMUNITIES LIMITED – KENSINGTON HOUSING ESTATE REDEVELOPMENT

### Developing new practices in public housing and mixed tenure estate management

The redevelopment of the former Kensington Public Housing Estate was one of the first major public housing redevelopment projects in Australia to deliver a privately managed mix of public and private housing. It was completed in 2012.

The site was originally made up of fifteen walk up blocks and three high rise towers containing a total of 850 public housing dwellings. Work on the redevelopment took place over 10 stages between 2002 and 2011 at a cost of \$150 million. The Victorian Government contributed \$47 million, with the remainder coming from the private sector.

The redevelopment delivered 926 units of housing made up of 429 public housing units (210 new public housing units and 219 renovated public housing units in the high rise towers) and 497 new privately owned units. Fifteen of these privately owned units were subsequently purchased by Urban Communities as new social or 'affordable' housing units, and managed separately in partnership with Hanover Welfare Services (The Hon Wendy Lovell MLC 2012). Approximately 30 per cent of the private properties are owner-occupied.

While the redevelopment resulted in a net loss of social housing (from 850 units of social housing to 429 units) a number of documented positive community development outcomes have been achieved through the redevelopment. This included improved employment and welfare outcomes, reduction in anti-social and violent behaviour and greater integration of the estate with the wider Kensington neighbourhood (Social Traders 2009).

## URBAN COMMUNITIES LIMITED – THE NICHOLSON, COBURG

### Championing innovative building techniques – Urban Communities Limited

The Nicholson in East Coburg, Melbourne was developed by Places Victoria as a commercially-replicable and highly innovative mixed use, mixed tenure apartment development offering affordable living in a well-connected location. The development incorporates a mix of 110 privately owned apartments, 31 affordable rental apartments and 58 social housing apartments, all built to the same quality specifications.

It is the largest building in Melbourne to-date utilising modular construction. The apartments were built in a Melbourne factory before being transported to site and craned into position. The project has sought to achieve market acceptance of modular construction as a new methodology in the local building industry for the efficient construction of high density apartment buildings. This form of modular construction may help to reduce construction costs of high density residential development in the future and thereby help to deliver more affordable housing.

The apartments have an appropriate size, proportion and layout so that each one accommodates ample and quality space to accommodate a range of everyday activities such as dining, cooking, sleeping, studying, socialising, recreation, and drying washing. The layout and balconies relate well to the internal courtyard which provides communal open space and natural ventilation to all dwellings.

The development incorporates an innovative on site place management model with one company managing all owners corporation property matters and tenancy management services for affordable rental and social housing dwellings. The same on site company also offers property and tenancy management services to private investor owners.

*City of Melbourne (2013) Future Living Strategy, p. 76*

## Policy drivers for Place Management

At the time of redevelopment of the Kensington Housing Estate, there was limited policy support for the management style put forward by Urban Communities. However, facing the significant problems of an aging, run down housing stock, a lack of significant funding for redevelopment, and serious social problems on the Estate, the Department was persuaded to try alternative options. Urban Communities put forward a strong case to the Department that there was value in trialing a community-driven approach to public housing estate management, and that this approach was more likely to yield results that would attract the desired private capital investment. As such, hallmarks of the Kensington redevelopment process were (DPC 2010, p.3):

**Combining people, property and place:** redevelopment to focus not just on built environment, but also on the long-term social wellbeing of the tenants and their social and economic participation in the broader community

**Deciding and governing locally:** a governance structure that enables the government, the developer and the community to have a fair say in how the project is designed and developed, and

**Providing urban renewal, not just property management:** the place manager and developer should be much more than a property management company. It is an agent for urban renewal, central in driving a community building approach.

In order to provide 'urban renewal, not just property management', the key objectives of the redevelopment and the management model more generally were (DPC 2010, p.5):

- Improving the standard of housing and amenity
- Creating training, employment and economic activity
- Addressing crime and safety
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Fostering community pride and participation, and
- Giving people a voice and great say in decisions that affect them and plans to improve their community.

The Place Management approach has now found recognition in the policy directions currently being promoted by DHS, which stress the need for greater integration of service systems across the Department, and for people to be 'at the centre of everything we do' (DHS 2013, p.5) (see Figure 1).

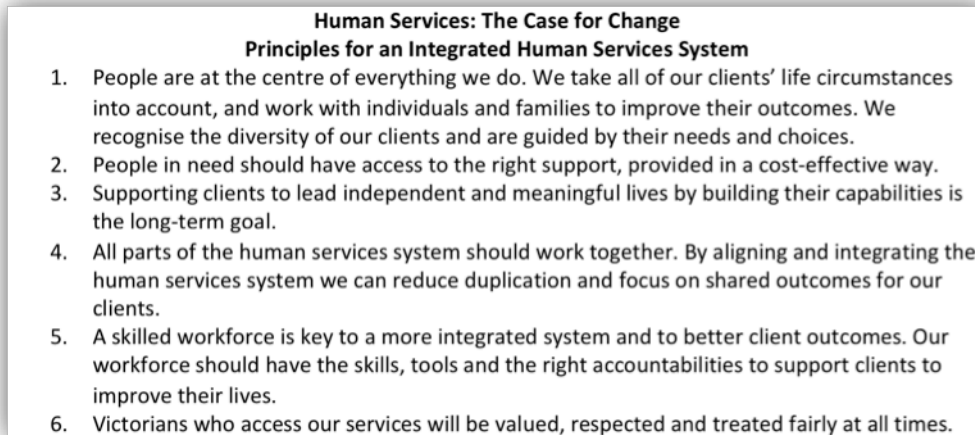


Figure 1 Department of Human Services, Principles for an Integrated Human Services System (DHS 2013).

This 'new' approach to service delivery, and management of public housing in particular, responds to a range of broader, systemic issues identified by DHS in the Government's delivery model of human services. These included a fragmented and poorly coordinated system; program focus instead of a client focus (where the onus is on people to make sense of services, navigate from door to door and 'fit' a program to qualify for support); failing to consider the family circumstances of clients, in particular the existence and experience of children and focusing on solving problems after they occur rather than anticipating and intervening to prevent them arising (DHS 2013, p.5).

The Place Management approach addresses many of these criticisms through a coordinated system of service delivery, looking at the site and tenancies as a whole rather than as individual components. An essential component of the approach is the offer of a 'one-stop-shop', through an on-site office where tenants and residents can walk in to inquire or address a complaint. Further, participation and engagement is encouraged through place-based programs and developing long range community building plans and activities to actively engage with and enhance opportunity of the community (DPC 2010). A good example of this is Urban Community's 'Magic Green Clean' grounds keeping service, where public housing tenants are hired as grounds keepers and provided with further training opportunities (see AMES 2012).

This is relevant to the housing development models in question in the *Getting to Yes Studio* because of the likely integration of a portion of social and affordable housing and the need to address the complex needs and vulnerability of these tenants, while at the same time ensuring a high amenity, livable and sustainable residential environment. As well as according with current best practice, taking this approach is likely to garner greater government support and create a more stable living environment.

## **Community building as central to the Place Management model**

In order to better understand the defining characteristics of Place Management, the annual reports and commentary on Urban Communities were reviewed. This review found that community building (as an idea, as well as activity) was central to the practice of Urban Communities. The key themes of community building activity undertaken were **economic innovation, health and well being** and **community strengthening**. These themes contain a number of activity sub-areas, including:

### **Economic innovation:**

- Volunteering support and linkages
- Education, training and employment initiatives
- Supporting local businesses
- Investment and funding attraction

### **Health and Wellbeing;**

- Access to health and safety service provision
- Community facilities
- Partnerships with health and recreation services
- Cultural programs

### **Community Strengthening**

- Engagement with Kensington Estate residents
- Community governance and participation
- Community events
- Information exchange and dissemination

However, it was apparent that the Place Management approach of Urban Communities took community building beyond individual activities, aiming to also embed community building and support into all aspects of the management of the housing estate.

For example, a major community building achievement in recent years was the establishment of the 56 Threads Café and catering company at the base of the 56 Derby Street tower on the Kensington Estate. Urban Communities, DHS and social enterprise AMES worked together to establish the café, which provides café meals, as well as social space for residents of the estate and the wider community. 50 per cent of AMES rental payments are quarantined with Urban Communities, to be reinvested in the community (DPC 2010, p.8). Currently, funds are being used to employ a public housing tenant. This partnership demonstrates the ability to capture value from the managed housing and reinvest it in the wider community, as well as a broader vision to better integrate a housing community with the wider neighborhood, and enhance resident's sense of connection and pride.

This approach reflects an understanding that the way that facilities are managed affects the experience, and behaviour of tenants – for example, their likelihood of paying rent on time, staying on the estate and investing their own time in community building activities (DPC 2010). Similarly, the way that tenancies are managed –the level of contact and support offered by the tenancy management team – influences tenant’s sense of community and belonging, and the way that they will subsequently interact with the facilities on the Estate.

The benefits of this approach, according to the Urban Communities 2012 Annual Report (full extract overleaf), are summarised in Table 1, with overall stated outcomes of stable and fully occupied communities with few residents moving on, resident support, engagement and community linkages, low arrears, job creation for residents, business activity and a continuing trend for a high percentage of owner occupiers (Urban Communities 2012).

**Table 1. Benefits of the place management approach**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Context driven response/Understanding of local context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mold and adapt service delivery to local conditions</li> <li>- Services can be targeted and site specific to a range of different customers</li> <li>- Identity and forge local partnerships</li> </ul>
<b>On-site management/presence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greater knowledge of the day to day operations</li> <li>- Up to the minute asset management</li> <li>- Detailed knowledge of buildings and management requirements protects investments</li> <li>- Resident support</li> <li>- Early identification of issues</li> <li>- Central hub for discussion and solutions.</li> </ul>
<b>Face-to-face contact (open door policy)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhanced community engagement</li> <li>- Communication efficient/effective</li> <li>- Quick response time to issues</li> </ul>
<b>Partnership approach (sharing resources, connecting communities)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leverage of additional funds into the estate</li> <li>- Neighbourhood is connected both physically and socially</li> </ul>
<b>Community involvement in decision making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage local decision making and ownerships</li> </ul>
<b>Equal standards for all (TM and FM, public and private)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sense of ownership and belonging.</li> <li>- Pride of place</li> <li>- Communities are safe, secure and welcoming,</li> <li>- Grounds, common areas and homes are well maintained.</li> </ul>

Source: Urban Communities Annual Report (2012)



## URBAN COMMUNITIES ANNUAL REPORT 2012

### PLACE MANAGEMENT AND THE VALUE TO COMMUNITIES

Place management provides an on-site responsive management service considering both the assets and the people who live within diverse communities. Urban Communities is more than a provider of housing. We strive to build strong communities.

Our place management approach underpinned by community building principles gives us the flexibility to think innovatively and mould and adapt service delivery, taking into account the characteristics of community, to forge partnerships and bring the community together to make local decisions in response to local need.

As a place based organisation Urban Communities has a greater knowledge of the day to day operations. We know the community, the diverse interests and needs, the buildings and the neighbourhood. Services can be targeted and site specific to a range of different customers. Our open door policy provides ready access for residents and visitors, communication is more effective and people call by with queries and ideas, to discuss issues or just for a chat. A “walk around” capacity means up to the minute asset management. Common high quality standards and personalised service for all asset and tenancy management services has significant benefits for everyone whether social, affordable or private residents, owner occupiers or investors and extends to the broader neighbourhood.

Indicators of our place management success includes stable and fully occupied communities with few residents moving on, resident support, engagement and community linkages, low arrears, job creation for residents, business activity and a continuing trend for a high percentage of owner occupiers. Communities are safe, secure and welcoming, the grounds, common areas and homes are well maintained and the neighbourhood is connected both physically and socially.

Place management in mixed tenure communities understands a broad range of stakeholders’ perspectives and provides a central hub for discussion and solutions. The value to community includes an onsite and responsive service, an understanding of the diverse tenants, local knowledge and a partnership approach which shares resources, connects community and instils community ownership. It protects investments having a detailed knowledge of buildings and the management requirements. Place management experience also helps shape new and regenerated housing and community projects contributing on the ground experience in service management, building design and social planning for now and the future.

Place management is no longer theory but a practice that provides many solutions to solving complex issues in local communities.

We have identified that the principles of place management can be utilised by many stakeholders. For Government it is an opportunity for existing and new build public housing to be embedded in a new mixed tenure housing model with a locally tailored service delivery system. For the private sector it protects assets and allows the development of genuine communities, considering both the people and the buildings. For the development sector building a community has more value than just developing built form. For existing communities physical and social integration can be achieved. There are fewer obstacles that prevent the creation of a diverse and thriving neighbourhood.

Located at multiple sites, Urban Communities demonstrates the establishment of different placed based solutions that are commercially and socially tailored for each of those communities. We have also reached a significant milestone with the completion of the redevelopment at Kensington which now provides learnings and benchmarks for future mixed tenure developments.



If Place Management is done well (i.e. the outcomes listed above are achieved), the result should be a housing community that is better integrated with the wider community, where the experience of residents is not one of disadvantage and exclusion, but rather opportunity for increased inclusion, economic participation and personal well-being. Anecdotally, Urban Communities appear to be achieving these outcomes. Comments on the Kensington Estate include (DPC 2010). For example, Urban Communities report that “the zero tolerance approach to rubbish and graffiti has stopped that behaviour and has engendered a sense of respect and pride. Kensington Estate is no longer a place where you dump old mattresses”. According to the Urban Communities CEO “On an annual rent roll of over \$2 million the arrears are only 0.5%. Of the 400 public housing properties, 40% are allocated to the highest need category of tenants. Occupancy is at 100%” (DPC 2010).

These are positive results, and ones that would ideally be achieved on the housing developments proposed in the Getting to Yes Studio. However, in order to build a strong business case for the housing development model, clear performance requirements are needed that can, if not guarantee, then at least set a standard for performance delivery that seeks to match the outcomes discussed above. The following section of this reports identifies the measures (benchmarking measures, as well as key performance indicators) could be put in place in any future Place Management contract in order to replicate these results, as well as to develop a stronger evidence base for the Place Management approach.

### **Distilling the success measures of the Place Management approach**

In his assessment of the evaluative practices of place management and urban renewal programs, Stewart- Weeks provides a useful summary good practice (Stewart-Weeks 2002, p. 5)<sup>1</sup>. In short, good practices requires:

- Creating a baseline measure of the “status quo” and thus providing a reasonably reliable and credible starting point from which to make evaluative judgements about the next to factors
- Using a range of tools and techniques to deliver insights about the program or project’s impact on the problem it was designed to engage
- Making sure that the evaluation contributes in some way to learning more about what works and what doesn’t.

### **Creating a baseline or ‘status-quo’**

Table 2 below sets out some suggested ‘success measures’, and a justification for the measure that will assist in creating the ‘baseline or status quo’. While integration, inclusion and well-being are

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<sup>1</sup> There is significant, valid criticism that place management, and community renewal strategies more broadly, suffer from a lack of effective evaluative practice- see Stewart-Weeks (2002).

difficult to quantify numerically, there are a number of measures that can be used as proxies, such as property prices in adjacent areas, education and training rates, occupancy and turn over and incidence of crime and anti social behavior. For example, low tenant turnover is desirable not only because it indicates that tenants are personally happy with their accommodation, but also because turn over of tenants and vacancies are significant cost burdens for a Housing Association to bear. Further, private investors will be looking to invest in a housing development where they either wish to live, or wish to be able to successfully rent out. Ideally, the living environment will be desirable and attractive to prospective tenants.

Gathering of data against these measures (separate to the KPIs as discussed below) will assist the development proponents and funders to benchmark the performance of Place Managed housing estates against other management models. It will provide a clearer picture of the extent to which the housing estate is integrated and accepted by the wider community (i.e. the private market), as well as the experience and sense of opportunity of residents on the estate. Data collected against these points (assuming that they paint a positive picture) can also be used as a tool by which to get further support for mixed tenure developments, another step along the way of 'getting to yes'.

**Table 2 Place Management Success Factors**

<b>Success Measure</b>	<b>Justification</b>
Occupancy and turn-over rates	High occupancy and low-turnover is indicative of an attractive living environment and stable tenant community. It reduces the cost burden on housing providers, and is more likely to attract private investment.
Rental arrears	Low rental arrears, similar to occupancy and turn over, is indicative of tenant satisfaction, as well as good management practices of early identification of tenants in financial stress.
Crime rates	Residents should feel safe and secure in their living environment. Well-managed housing developments should have low incidence of crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. This can be achieved both through good on-site monitoring, as well as engendering a sense of ownership, belonging and pride.
Property prices in adjacent areas	Property prices directly adjacent to the development can be used as a proxy for the extent to which to development is integrated with the surrounding neighborhood.
Overall subsidy paid by Vic Gov/Vic Gov spending on the estate per resident	Effective Place Management can potentially lead to cost efficiencies, for example, through engaging residents on the estate in work programs and thus reducing reliance on job-seeker payments, or through reducing the administrative burden of social housing management through centralized service delivery.  However, cautioned should be exercised here – Place Management is not first and foremost a cost-saving measure, and may in some cases be more expensive up front than traditional service delivery models.
Resident reported satisfaction levels.	Self-reported satisfaction levels (through survey) are an important corollary to the above measures, serving as a 'pulse check' and early identifier or emerging issues.
Education and training attainment rates	Depending on the focus of the service provider, this indicator can usefully measure the extent to which the community building efforts of the Place Manager are leading to greater accessibility of and engagement with education and training opportunities.

## Key Performance Indicators as the tool to deliver insights into place management

Separately, key performance indicators (KPIs) should be set that reflect the expectation that community building is imbedded in the service delivery model of Place Management. KPIs are measures that provide managers or evaluators with the most important performance information to enable them or their stakeholders to understand the performance level of the organisation. KPIs should clearly link to the strategic objectives of the organisation and therefore help monitor the execution of the business strategy. In the case of Place Management, these indicators should assist the Place Manager to measure the extent to which the desired community building outcomes are being achieved through service delivery at the housing development.

The KPIs suggested here fall under three key categories of participation; utilization of services and facilities and local amenity.

**Table 3. Suggested Place Management KPIs**

Theme	Category	Suggested KPI
<b>Participation</b>	Community Events	Number of programs
		Number of participants
	Volunteering	Number of programs
		Number of participants
	Education and training	Number of programs
		Number of participants
		Number of referrals
	Employment	Number of residents employed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By Place Manager</li> <li>• Externally</li> </ul>		
Number of referrals		
<b>Utilisation of services and facilities</b>	Community facilities provision	Number
	Community facilities programming	Utilisation Rate
<b>Local amenity</b>	Incidence of anti-social behaviour (including, for e.g.)	Incidence of vandalism/graffiti
		Incidence of rubbish dumping

### Evaluation strategies

Furthermore, effective evaluating strategies should be put in place to monitor not only the 'success measures' and KPIs discussed above, but also to review and refresh if necessary these measures. Such evaluation strategies should include resident surveys, as well as staff development and training opportunities. As noted by Judy Sutherland, of Housing Choices Australia, effective management of mixed tenure housing is as much about good staff training and education as it is about physical infrastructure and good design principles (pers.comm. 17 October 2013).

## Conclusion

Thus far, the 'Place Management' model pursued by Urban Communities appears to be offering a successful model of co-development of mixed tenure housing, with sustainable community and financial outcomes. This paper has provided a clear understanding of what is implied in this approach, and what the key measures of success are. In acknowledgement of the need to create effective, scalable models with which to contract for place management services, desired performance requirements for place management contracts have been defined, in particular, defining what outcomes are sought in the 'place' in question, and what indicators should be applied to measure progress towards these outcomes.

This research is important both from a contract management point of view, as well as to enable fulsome evaluation of a place management model and the wider community benefits that are claimed to arise from effective Place Management. Setting up effective performance requirements with clear accountability criteria and measurement standards can assist both in achieving better outcomes for tenants on mixed tenure estates, as well as to establish the 'business case' for investing in place managed housing developments.

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