



Community Housing Council of SA

**Policy Forum: 15th April 2005**

**“A Regional Infrastructure Model for the Community Housing Sector”**

Presentation by Matt Fisher: Senior Policy Officer

**A Regional Infrastructure Model: What is it about?**

- Long-term planning: next 10-15 years
- Building capacity within the sector
- Changes to the way some infrastructure services are delivered
- Recognising and resourcing some designated CHOs as service and support providers to others
- Improving viability and stability of small CHOs
- Fostering change and renewal in Co-op sector
- Allowing for possible establishment of new service providers, e.g. a secondary Co-op

**What is ‘Infrastructure’?**

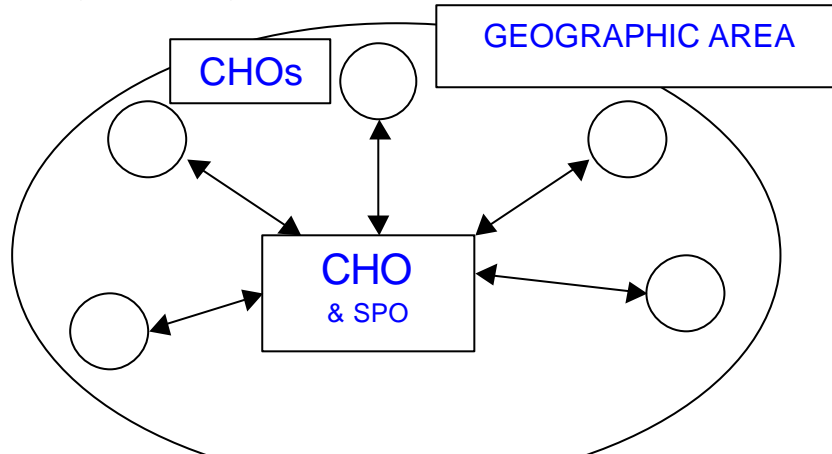
- Facilities: offices, meeting spaces, phones, computers
- CHO Management skills and services: Skilled volunteers, paid CHO staff, other service providers
- Representation & advocacy: CHCSA
- Asset management & maintenance services: Comhouse
- Education & training: SACHA
- CHO Support & Development: SACHA

**Essential Features of the Model**

- CHOs operate in networks within a particular geographic area, or with another common interest.
- CHOs within a network have common access to a Service Provider Organisation (SPO). This would probably be an existing CHO, but could be a new organisation set up for that purpose.
- The SPO offers services to the CHOs in the network; for example; finance and rent management, tenancy or property management
- The SPO uses quality IT tools for ‘volume’ management
- CHOs use the SPO’s services on a voluntary basis, and in a way that suits their needs; maybe a little, maybe more

### The basic model

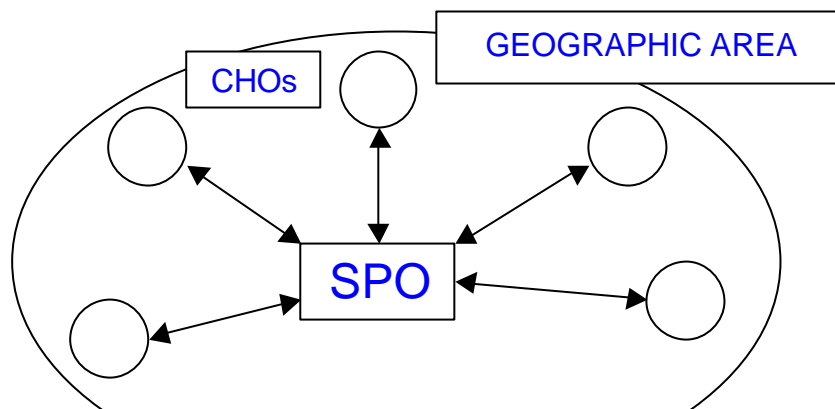
- CHOs functioning as a network within a geographic area. One designated CHO acting as the regional SPO.



Designated CHO is a 'generalist' housing provider in its own right *and* a service provider, perhaps with Board representation for network members. It could offer facilities, CHO management services, housing options for tenants

### An alternative

- A number of smaller CHOs in an area working together to establish a new service provider organisation (SPO) for their common needs.



SPO is not a housing provider, but a service provider, jointly controlled by network members. It could offer facilities, CHO management services, CHO support & development

### **What has been done so far? What will be done next?**

- Infrastructure Needs Assessment Project 1995
- Ideas about Regional Infrastructure Model presented at a CHCSA workshop in Nov. 2004
- Presentation to SACHA Board in Feb. 2005
- This workshop
- Presentation to SACHA staff in late May 2005
- A new discussion paper based on outcomes of this workshop, completed by June 2005

### **Why is this worth thinking about? What are the reasons behind it?**

#### **Context: Community Organisations**

- Approximately 700,000 community organisations in Australia, most with a budget under \$1 million
- 65% of all Australians over age 14 belong to one or more community organisations
- Community organisations provide employment for over 600,000 people
- Community volunteering contributes an estimated \$42 billion in value to the economy
- Non-profit organisations have approximately 30 million members (many people belong to more than one)\* (\* <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au>)

#### **Context: Community & Health**

- “Community organisations have the power to tangibly improve population health. In this case, what’s good for individuals and what’s good for the community is the same thing. Those with the most social connectedness, i.e. who have a high level of participation in social and community organisations and networks, have lower mortality rates ... Community groups are the engines that drive our ability to change behaviour, reduce morbidity, expand life expectancy and innovate change.”\*  
Prof. Lisa Berkman, Harvard University School of Public Health  
(\*ourcommunity.com.au)

#### **Context: The Role of Community Housing**

- We are as much a part of this community sector as we are a Government funded social housing program
- Organisations operating within, and as part of, communities of interest are often best placed to understand and meet the needs of that community
- Diversity, because different communities will always have different needs
- AND to provide housing for people on low incomes and with other housing related needs

### **Context: Sector Growth & Development**

- 1991-92 to 2003-04: growth from approx 1500 to 4500 properties
- Development of a number of Large CHOs: 11 CHOs managing 100 or more properties; another 4 50-100
- Currently 72 Co-ops, 47 Associations
- In 2005: State Housing Plan. Community Housing well positioned for more growth.
- The 21st century model of social housing?

### **Why a Regional Infrastructure Model?**

- How can we use the limited infrastructure resources we got, to best support the sector over the next 10-15 years? So that:
- CHOs are sustainable and healthy
- Sector diversity is protected and strengthened: Assoc and Co-op, large and small, metro and country
- CHOs have the capacity to meet the goals of the SHP, and those that want to grow have the skills and support to do it effectively
- As a sector we assist people in our communities to live well, to grow as people and to be well connected

### **The Model in More Detail: 1**

- Role of the Service Provider Organisation:
- Offers specific CHO management services to CHOs within a network; finance and rent management, tenancy and property management
- Paid workers using high quality IT tools to enable 'volume' management
- Office space might be available as a 'regional centre' for meetings or training
- Current Large CHOs are candidates, but not necessarily. Could be Assoc or Co-op

### **The Model in More Detail: 2**

- Other CHOs within a network:
- Use SPO services on a fee-for-service basis (with appropriate funding arrangements)
- Use of SPO is voluntary, and services provided are negotiated between SPO and CHO
- CHOs continue to function as independent organisations, including better use of IT tools
- Small CHOs with widely spread stock might consolidate within a regional area
- CHOs network with each other, whether using SPO or not

### **The Model in More Detail: 3**

- Other providers of infrastructure:
- SACHA continues as funder & regulator
- Training still coordinated through a single agency; possibly broadened into some new areas
- CHCSA continues advocacy & representation role; new regions might gradually replace current 'regional forum' & 'country forum' structures
- CHCSA possibly expands role to include CHO support and development, participation
- Network links with local support agencies for specific needs

### **The Model in More Detail: 4**

- Funding:
- Possibly a mixed funding structure: fee-for-service from network members, plus supplementary recurrent funding?
- CHOs have sufficient funds to purchase basic management services, within rent structure
- If management tasks are done 'in-house' and voluntarily, these funds could provide other 'incentive benefits' to tenants/members
- Some redeployment of resources from Government into sector

### **The Model in More Detail: 5**

- CHO Tenants and/or Members:
- Access to secure, affordable, appropriate housing
- Network structure may allow for changes in tenure or housing type over time, according to need
- Training and support/development services assist participation and/or life skills
- SPO might assist in access to regionally based support services if required

### **The Model in More Detail: 6**

- Community Development:
- Increased efficiency in carrying out basic management functions, allows more focus on 'community development' aspects
- What does this mean for a 'CHO community'?
  - ⇒ Ability to live independently, and access support
  - ⇒ Mutual support, social networks, friendships
  - ⇒ Ability to use housing opportunity as a 'step up'
  - ⇒ Gaining employment or personal skills
  - ⇒ 'Outreach' connections with other community agencies
  - ⇒ Diversity of housing services offered
  - ⇒ Action on sustainability

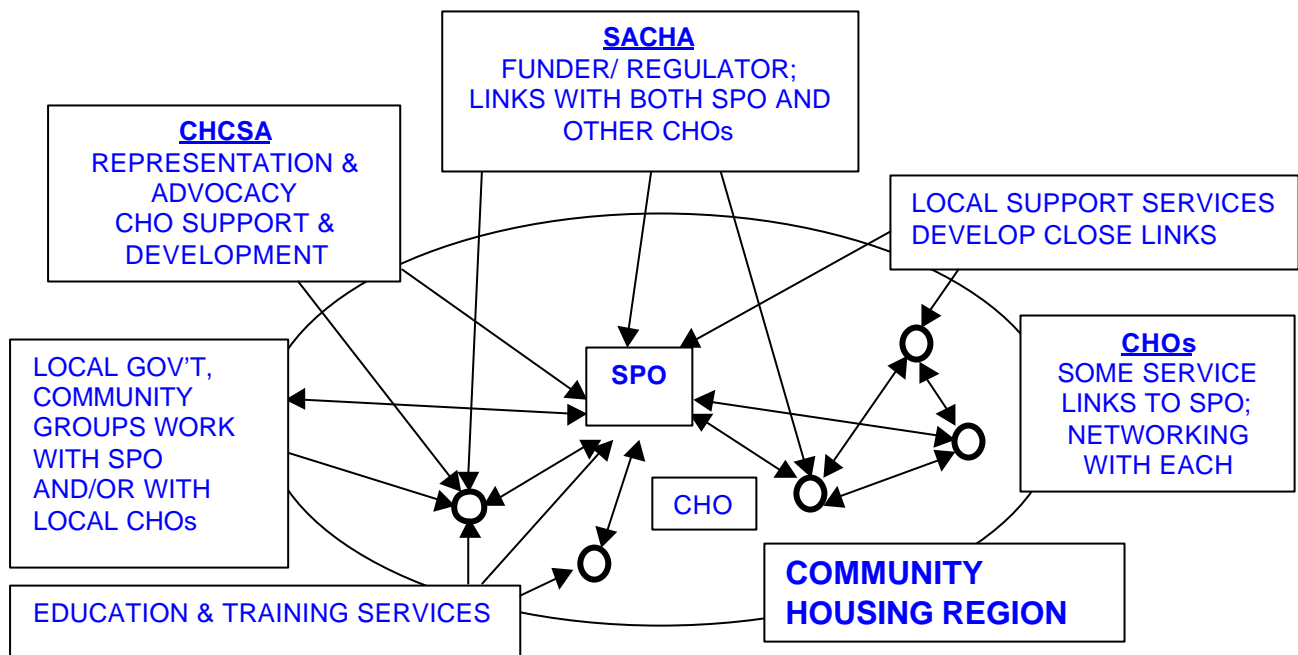
### The Model in More Detail: 7

- Issues for smaller CHOs:
- Volunteer-managed, smaller groups continue to operate autonomously, continue to need active, skilled participation
- Use of SPO is voluntary, and if taken up services are tailored to current needs of the CHO
- Level of services used can vary over time
- Opportunity to outsource some operational tasks to another community organisation
- Assisted to improve participation, and develop in new, creative directions

### The Model in More Detail: 8

- Operating in Country Areas:
- Model would need to be adapted to country regions
- SPO role could be played by a metro-based CHO, or a country based provider?
- Could require greater travel component
- Supporting expansion of Community Housing in country areas and regional towns? New groups 'mentored' by SPO?

### The Model in More Detail: 9



- SPO OFFERS MANAGEMENT SERVICES TO CHOS: RENT, FINANCE, TENANCY
- SPO OFFICE COULD BECOME A VENUE FOR MEETINGS, IT FACILITIES, TRAINING
- CHOs PURCHASE MANAGEMENTSERVICES IF REQUIRED
- TENANT MAY SHIFT BETWEEN TENURE FORMS AS NEEDS CHANGE

### **Key Outcomes**

- Improved focus and capacity in areas of community development; links between sector and wider community
- Greater capacity in staffing, skills, IT and CHO support & development based in the sector itself
- Volunteer work better supported by paid, sector-based services
- Improved long-term viability for small CHOs
- Protecting sector diversity
- Networking and support between CHOs
- Reliable and flexible services for tenants

### **Other Benefits of a Regional Approach**

- Potential to build closer ties with local governments
- Long-term efficiencies in transport costs
- Alignment with regionally based support services
- Development of a strong community identity
- Improved communication and support between CHOs within a particular area
- Fits well with long-term strategies for environmental sustainability

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