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The Tenant Participation (TP) Program was funded by the Department of Housing/Department of Communities for nigh on 20 years. Originally TP was for public housing tenants, but with the introduction of the One Social Housing System in 2006, community housing tenants were included. Through the TP Program, tenants had a voice and were able to contribute to discussions with the Department.

Local groups were formed in unit complexes or suburbs, then Regional groups were formed, representing all suburbs in an area covered by the Area Office (now called Housing Service Centre). At one time there was even a State group, formed from a representative from each of the Regional groups.

Regional groups were the conduit between tenants and the Area Office, and were funded, for running expenses, such as meetings, forums etc., and to produce a newsletter five times a year. This kept tenants informed of any changes in the Department, as well as what was happening in the area. It served to socially include tenants who might have been isolated due to ill-health etc, and was well received by tenants, some of whom contributed items for inclusion.

Another activity that socially included tenants was the Annual Garden Awards, again funded by the Department and co-ordinated by the Regional Group in each area. For a number of years the Ipswich Regional Tenants Group was asked to act as auspice for two Housing Service Centres where there were no Regional Groups. This enabled tenants from these two other areas to take part in the Garden Awards.

From the start of this financial year, funding was stopped and the TP Program was axed. This has had an adverse effect, as without funding there can be no newsletters produced and sent to tenants, so, although an informal (unfunded) group has taken over in Ipswich, there cannot be the same contact with tenants as in the past. We cannot keep them informed and up-to-date with what is happening in the Department and in our own area.

I had the experience of being a public housing tenant for years before there was ever a thought of Tenant Participation, and then when I again lived in public housing and the program was introduced, the benefits were obvious.

Now there is just no way of keeping tenants informed and included.