



The Townsville Healthy City Planning Project commenced in 2002 as part of Council Policy 2000 initiatives to identify local health and environment needs and document strategies to address the health issues of the City. The Healthy City Plan is the product of a local process where representatives of the community and agencies participated in the identification of both health priorities and solutions. This document contains strategic actions to be implemented by community groups, health and environment agencies from the three levels of government and other stakeholders, working in partnership, to implement strategic actions and deliver health outcomes over the next five years. Cities with a comprehensive Health Plan that demonstrates an understanding of their health needs, that develop partnerships with health agencies to work in collaboration, that promote community participation in decision-making, are well placed to enhance health status, compared to cities that don't act.

The 'Townsville Healthy City Plan' represents the best efforts of local government and its community to develop goals and strategies to respond to local public health priorities. The Healthy City Plan is a coordinating document that provides a structure for interagency response to local public health issues. The document also allows Townsville City agencies to annually review their public and environmental health partnerships, policies, programs and resources in light of the diverse and changing health needs of the City.

## Background

The Public Health Planning project was initiated by the Townsville City Council and developed with the assistance of the School of Public Health, Griffith University. In March 2002, the Project Management Group of the Townsville Healthy City Project met to discuss the vision for the project. The vision statement was identified as: -

*'Recognise health as a valuable resource to the community through strengthening networks and linkages'.*

The aims of the project included: -

- Build alliances, partnerships and cooperation;
- Provide direction and integration through strategic planning;
- Strive for realistic outcomes; and
- Involve the community in health planning.

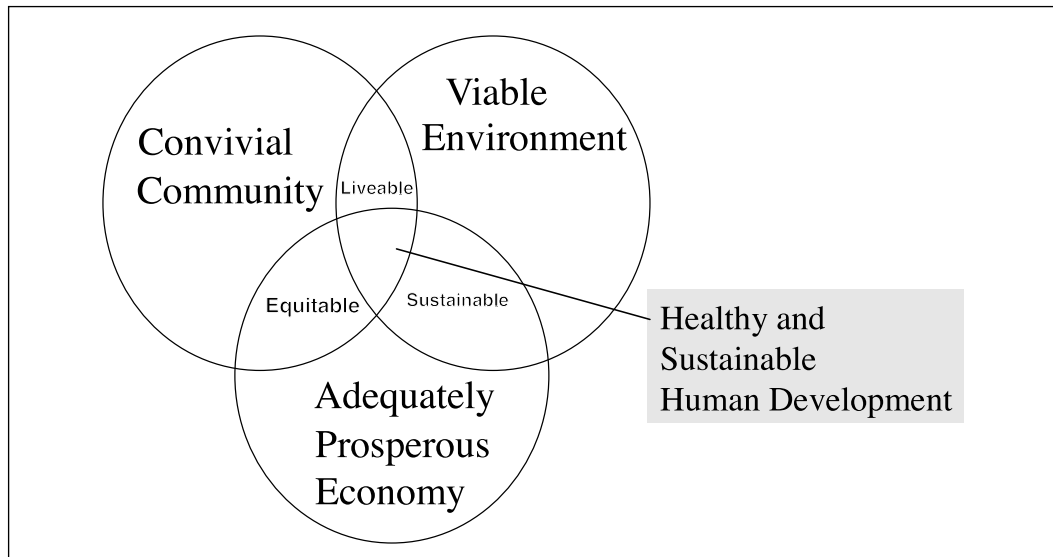
The planning is based on the World Health Organisation's Healthy Cities Approach. The Healthy Cities Approach has a focus on the city setting and attempts to consolidate and localise very broad health promotion strategies so that the social, economic and environmental conditions which promote healthy and sustainable communities, can be realised. In Queensland, a model has been developed to implement Public Health Plans in local government in line with the principles of the World Health Organisation's Healthy Cities Approach.

*'A healthy city is one that improves its environment and expands its resources so that people can support each other in achieving their highest potential... A healthy city is conscious of health as a municipal issue and is striving to improve it. Any city can be healthy if it is committed to health' (WHO, 1995)*

Trevor Hancock in 1997 described a new conceptual model of human development. Figure 1 highlights three main areas: community, environment and economy. The outcome of the interrelationship of these areas can be conceptualised as health or, more broadly, as human development.



The model suggests that good health and sustainable human development will only be achieved if the relationships between the three areas are equitable, sustainable and liveable. Community conviviality, environmental viability and economic adequacy need to be balanced in a City. Community conviviality is related to the web of social relations and 'sense of ecosystem, including air, water, soil and the food chain. Economic adequacy means having a level of economic activity that meets the needs of residents in the City.



**Figure 1: The Contexts of Health (Hancock, T., 1997)**

The Townsville Healthy City Plan has its foundations in this model of human development. A 'Healthy Townsville' demonstrates an integrated approach to developing all its components and tries to be equitable, liveable, sustainable and cohesive, to achieve high health and environmental standards and be economically prosperous.

Formulating a Healthy City Plan is an important process for Townsville because the Healthy City Plan: -

- places the challenges related to health and the quality of life on the agenda of policy makers within local government, health, environment and family departments and non-government organisations;
- links health gains to environmental issues;
- rationalises scarce resources, including people's time and energy;
- establishes a basis for monitoring the progress of initiatives and evaluating success;
- develops a basis for budgeting for the development of appropriate services and programs for health;
- demonstrates the commitment of Council to greater participation in local decision making; and
- can improve the experience of living in the city, neighbouring areas and communities over time.

Effective planning is complex and demanding. It involves developing a climate with the political will for planning for health, which means that the strategies must accommodate the unique political context of the City and its organisations. The Townsville Healthy City Plan reflects the collaborative approaches of Council working with city agencies and residents to maintain and improve the health of the city. The Healthy City Plan is a planning mechanism with input from across Commonwealth, State, Local Government and other agencies and has the main purpose to promote health and environment action at a local level. Communities in the City have been engaged in decision-making about environmental health services and will contribute to the strategic implementation of the Plan in the future.