Handout 2: Research as a Community Sector Activity

Community service workers are engaged in research activities more or less on a daily basis.

Some of the research activities community service workers regularly undertake are:

- identifying a need for action or identifying tasks that must be completed if program objectives are to be met
- planning action i.e. Working out what needs to be done & who has the skills to do it
- collecting information to assist in understanding problems confronting the agency or its programs
- reflecting upon tasks once they have been completed and working out better ways to manage similar tasks next time
- finding out what other agencies are doing and if you can learn from their activities
- talking to community members about their lives
- researching services and other entitlements for clients
- finding out about pilot program models being used in other countries and in other states
- finding out about policies that impact upon client groups.

When a community service worker turns routine tasks into research opportunities and research experiences into management opportunities this is called **ACTION RESEARCH**.

This way of working emphasises the need for the ‘best practice’ worker to organise all the information that comes to them in the course of their work in a systematic way to improve their work. It emphasises turning routine tasks into professional development and improved practice opportunities. It emphasises using everyday events in your program for effective and reflective practice.

Action research is **participatory research**. It is about including your community or client group in your activities to find out about what they need and how these needs can best be met. It’s not about distant workers intruding in community members lives. **IT’S ABOUT WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY.**