



ACOSS Discussion Paper | May 2008

Australian
Council of
Social Service

ACOSS National Conference 2008

9 - 10 April, Melbourne

Outcomes Discussion Paper

DISCUSSION PAPER

First published in 2008 by the
Australian Council of Social Service

Locked Bag 4777

Strawberry Hills, NSW, 2012 Australia

Ph 02 9310 6200 Fax 02 9310 4822

Email: info@acoss.org.au

Website: www.acoss.org.au

© Australian Council of Social Service, 2008.

This publication is copyright. Apart from fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism, or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Enquiries should be addressed to the Publications Officer, Australian Council of Social Service. Copies are available from the address above.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Opening Address:The Hon John Brumby, MP	2
The Hon Julia Gillard, MP	9
Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens	18
The Hon Brendan O'Connor, MP	24
Workshop on Indigenous Communities	28
Workshop on Health	33
Workshop on Supporting Employment & Participation.....	37
Workshop on Inclusive and Diverse communities.....	40
Workshop on Housing and Homelessness	44
Workshop on Early Childhood Development	47
Workshop on Youth Transitions	49
Workshop on People with Disability	54
Workshop on Climate Change, Essential Services and Equity	63

Introduction

The ACOSS Social Inclusion Conference was held in Melbourne on the 9th and 10th of April 2008. The Conference featured international speakers and speakers from Commonwealth and State Governments, the corporate sector, unions and the community sector.

The second day of the conference featured all-day workshops where delegates discussed four questions across nine specific areas.

The four questions were:

- What are the strengths and opportunities of the Social Inclusion Agenda?
- Who is excluded? How and why are people excluded? Where?
- What are the goals, benchmarks and targets for the Commonwealth Government to implement?
- What broad strategies might be adopted to achieve these targets and what data is needed to measure progress?

The nine workshop areas were:

- Indigenous communities
- Health
- Supporting employment and participation
- Inclusive and diverse communities
- Housing and homelessness
- Early Childhood Development
- Youth transitions and education
- Disability
- Climate change, essential services & equity

This Discussion Paper contains the speeches given at the Conference by The Hon Julia Gillard, The Hon John Brumby, Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens, and The Hon Brendan O'Connor, as well as reports from each of the workshops.

This paper is being circulated to all Conference participants and ACOSS members.

ACOSS welcomes feedback and additional material on the workshop reports and any other input which relates to the four key questions.

Please forward comments and additional information to conference@acoss.org.au by Friday 6th June.

Following collation of additional comments and materials, a final paper will be prepared and sent out to participants.

(Please note that the workshop reports do not necessarily reflect the views of ACOSS.)

Opening address on Social Inclusion

The Hon John Brumby, MP

Premier of Victoria

I want to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we stand, the Wurundjeri people, and pay my respects to their Elders – past and present. I want to thank the Australian Council of Social Service for inviting me to speak to its national conference. And I want to welcome our interstate visitors to Victoria.

The title of this year's conference is *Taking steps for a fair go for all – social inclusion policies and practices*. When I think of taking steps, when I think of a fair go, when I think of social inclusion, I think about the first school I taught at – Eaglehawk Secondary College.

For our interstate visitors, Eaglehawk is an old gold mining town on the fringe of Bendigo.

By the time I arrived in 1976, the gold was long gone.

In economic and social terms, Eaglehawk was very disadvantaged. It was the second poorest urban area in Victoria.

Mind you, that state of affairs was not the fault of the local community. Eaglehawk was a town with good families and good children – but without good enough facilities or good enough opportunities.

It was a situation that reminds me of what Professor Ronald Henderson's *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty* said about poverty in 1975 – the year before I arrived in Eaglehawk: "Its continuance is a judgement on the society which condones conditions causing poverty."

Eaglehawk Secondary College fought against the continuance of disadvantage.

The school – the teachers in partnership with the school council – worked to engineer better conditions for its students through before-school and breakfast programs, sports programs, linking up with the community health centre, and linking up in all sorts of other ways with the local community.

What Eaglehawk taught me was that two of the best ways to overcome disadvantage are, firstly, through education and, secondly, through community building.

The lessons I learned at Eaglehawk stayed with me and came into play in 2001, when the then-Premier, Steve Bracks, asked me to Chair the Latrobe Valley Taskforce.

By the end of the 1990s, the Latrobe Valley was doing it tough. The State Electricity Commission – or SEC – had been broken up, and the local community had received little in terms of special assistance from either the Howard or the Kennett Governments.

Unemployment was very high, population was declining, housing prices had crashed – with

weatherboard houses on the market for as little as \$20,000.

Like Eaglehawk, here was a community with good families and good children – but without good enough facilities or good enough opportunities. The Latrobe Valley Taskforce's job was to draw up a social and economic blueprint for the region.

We spent the best part of three months listening to the local community, made 50 recommendations, backed those recommendations with \$105.8 million in funding, and we implemented every project.

Our largest project – around \$17 million – was for the repair, restoration and rejuvenation of much of local social housing stock – linked through local employment and additional trade training places. It was the forerunner of the Neighbourhood Renewal program we formally introduced in the State Budget two years later.

In a way, the Latrobe Valley Taskforce encapsulates our Government's approach to the community and the economy.

We see the two as inextricably linked.

What I've always said about the economy – whether its financial management or job creation or infrastructure investment – is that it's a means to an end ... and that end is a stronger, fairer society.

You want a strong economy because you understand that economic growth creates the capacity for better services and social infrastructure – like hospitals, schools and community centres.

But you also understand that you can't have a strong economy without a strong community ... that, while economic growth may *pay* for social progress, social progress *enables* economic growth.

That's why our Government has worked hard to make Victoria a national leader in job creation, building approvals, housing starts, biotechnology and medical research, and innovation.

That's why we have re-invested the proceeds of economic growth back into rebuilding and restoring services – almost quadrupling infrastructure expenditure and investing record amounts in hospitals and schools.

That's why we initiated the National Reform Agenda – with a focus on human capital ... the social and economic benefits of better education and skills training, and better preventative healthcare.

And that's why one of my first acts as Premier was to make early childhood development a Statewide priority ...

Because I strongly believe the better a child's start in life, the greater their chances of attaining the education and training they need to get the job they want later in life.

'The Forgotten People'

Besides being Premier, I am the Member for Broadmeadows.

If you are from interstate, Broadmeadows is in Melbourne's northern suburbs.

It is – like Eaglehawk – a place with good people who, historically, have not been given good enough access to opportunity.

In 1951, the Housing Commission took over 2,270 hectares of land in Broadmeadows and started building a massive housing estate.

Unfortunately, there were not nearly enough services pumped into the area to keep pace with the needs of the Broadmeadows' growing families.

Broadmeadows' first Catholic parish priest, Father **Michael Flanagan**, wrote to the then-Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, pleading for extra education funding.

"Most of the people," Father Flanagan wrote, "are new arrivals, faced with new the task of furnishing new homes on limited incomes and practically all of them have young families."

But Sir Robert didn't help the "forgotten people" who lived in Broadmeadows.

The extent of the failure of successive Governments to adequately support the community I represent is epitomized by the fact that Broadmeadows had to wait 50 years to get a decent public library.

I signed the contract for the construction of that library as part of a \$10.2 million multifunctional community learning hub called a Global Learning Village.

It is a fabulous facility. A facility that any community would be proud to call its own. But Broadmeadows should not have had to wait 50 years to cut the ribbon.

We must learn from that past mistake.

That is why last month I announced new plans to ensure Melbourne's future population growth – and we are growing at a rate not seen since the post-War boom between 1947 and 1966 – is channelled into strong new communities, not more urban sprawl.

We are developing detailed Precinct Structure Plans for each of the 32 new communities being planned for our growth corridors – to ensure these new communities have the transport, education, health centres, libraries and facilities they need.

We've already called for expressions of interest for 11 new schools in the growth corridors. These new schools will be developed as community centres – to be used 7 days a week throughout the year, rather than just during school hours.

But there's more to community building than just new buildings. Community building is also about social inclusion, which brings me to **A Fairer Victoria**.

A Fairer Victoria is our Government's landmark action plan to reduce disadvantage in Victorian communities – to make our State's prosperity more accessible to more people. Since launching **A Fairer Victoria** three years ago, we have invested \$3 billion in programs designed to: improve access to childcare and kindergarten; prevent child abuse through early intervention; deliver improved services and better Police responses to family violence; improve public and social housing; and deliver more support to people with a disability.

A Fairer Victoria is unique in Australia for its size and scope – and it is making a difference:

- Making a \$510 million commitment – the largest ever made by a State Government – to public and social housing in last year's Budget
- Making kindergarten effectively free to 17,000 four-year-olds a year from low-income families
- Boosting the Education Maintenance Allowance for low-income families by 60%
- Halving recidivism rates for Indigenous offenders through the establishment of 8 new Koori Courts
- Boosting the number of Indigenous children accessing maternal and child health centres by more than 40%
- Quadrupling funding for the Youth Early Psychosis program, which provides support during the critical early phase of a psychotic illness
- And establishing 12 new Neighbourhood Houses and generating 4,600 new jobs in Neighbourhood Renewal areas

Time constraints keep me from listing more of the outcomes from **A Fairer Victoria**, but that gives an indication of the impact that \$3 billion investment has had.

What does the success of **A Fairer Victoria** tell us? Three things. First, it has been financed by Victoria's strong, growing economy. Second, this \$3 billion investment in our community will help ensure our State has the healthy, educated, highly-skilled workforce it needs to drive economic growth. And, third, this initiative can and should be expanded nationwide.

With the election of the Rudd Government, we have the opportunity to put together an action plan to tackle social exclusion in every State and Territory.

As the Senate Poverty Inquiry concluded in 2004: "Poverty and inequality in Australia today represent a fundamental test of our national resolve and values. If we are serious as a community about our claim to be a fair society – indeed the land of the fair go – then concerted action is required."

After a long decade of inaction at the national level, we have a chance to work towards not just **A Fairer Victoria** but **A Fairer Australia**.

Victorian Action Plan

Building stronger and more inclusive communities is a major project. However, unlike building a new Royal Children's Hospital or a Regional Fast Rail network, this major project is one that never ends.

Social progress is a journey without a final destination, because there is always another child needing an education, another family needing healthcare, another person with a disability needing support and access, another refugee needing help to start a new life, and, unfortunately, another family needing protection from violence.

That means that the battles that are won today must invariably be won again tomorrow.

This is not news to the people in this room. After all, the organisations many of you represent are on the frontline, which is why I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the great work done by the Victorian Council of Social Service and its members to deliver many of the initiatives funded by **A Fairer Victoria**.

Our Government greatly values the work that you do. In Victoria, there are currently more than 120,000 community and not-for-profit organisations. Nationally, this sector also contributes \$20.8 billion to the Australian economy and employs more than 600,000 people.

These organisations are the backbone of communities across the nation – helping keep our communities safe, connected and active, and helping keep our environment healthy. And their importance will increase as the needs of our ageing and growing community continue to change.

Our Government wants to do more to give our community organisations the support, investment and leadership they need to keep pace with developments in our economy and society. That's why I am today releasing an action plan simply titled **Strengthening Community Organisations**.

This action plan is the culmination of two extensive consultations as part of the Stronger Community Organisations Project – or SCOP – and the Review of Not-for-Profit Regulation by the State Services Authority.

I want to thank Professor Allan Fels, who led the SCOP review, and Susan Pascoe, who led the SSA project. I also want to thank everyone involved in the consultation processes – particularly those who made submissions to SCOP and those who served on the Steering Committee.

Your expertise and knowledge has been central to the development of this action plan, which will go a long way towards supporting the sector now and into the future.

We want to work with community organisations to implement the action plan – and, in broad terms:

- Reduce the administrative burden faced by community and not-for-profit organisations
- Promote innovation and efficiency in the provision of services
- Establish a clear framework of information and evidence for future decision-making
- And strengthen collaboration – to enhance the operation of community and non-profit organisations across Victoria and Australia

More specifically, I can announce that we will streamline reporting processes for not-for profit groups, and simplify the Associations Incorporation Act.

I can announce that we will work across all jurisdictions to harmonise legislation. And I can announce \$13.87 million in new funding our Government is committing towards the delivery of this action plan. This will include \$6.6 million to increase the capacity of the sector by:

- Establishing a new Office for the Community Sector to oversee the implementation of the action plan over the next three years
- Setting up a portable long service leave scheme to help the community services sector retain skilled workers
- Expanding access to information and support services that help not-for-profits meet challenges such as performance, long term strategy and capacity development
- Providing funding for the sector to consider establishing a new representative body for community organisations
- Funding a feasibility study for a National Academic Centre of Leadership Excellence for the sector
- And developing a Community Services Workforce Capability Framework, which will focus on ways not-for-profits can develop the skills and capabilities they need to improve service delivery

To promote innovation in service delivery we will also invest:

- \$2 million to help establish a Community Enterprise Catalyst – creating an incubator to give emerging community enterprises the relevant and ongoing supports they need to get started and succeed
- And invest \$5.3 million to establish 12 local Community Foundations in disadvantaged areas to bring community agencies and business supporters together to identify needs and fund local community projects

Conclusion

Building stronger communities takes time. And, ultimately, the progress of a community or a state or a nation is measured in generations.

That's why, as a community, we are constantly asking ourselves:

Do we enjoy a better quality of life than our parents or grandparents?

Will our children enjoy a better quality of life than us?

And – What changes do we have to make today to secure our quality of life for tomorrow?

These are generational questions.

Generational questions that demand generational answers based on principles such as one of the Labor Party's maxims: to create a better, fairer life for working people.

That principle has guided me since I was first elected to Federal Parliament in 1983 – 25 years ago.

Our world has changed a great deal since 1983. The Grade Preps who started school back in 1983 are now entering their 30s. They have seen the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Wall Street crash, the proliferation of the Internet, the globalisation of the economy, the rise of China, and Australia's longest boom and longest drought on record.

Many are now parents. Many are homeowners – or saving to become a homeowner. Some run small businesses. Some work in large corporations. Others are training or studying to attain a new skill or qualification. And others are still trying to overcome social or economic disadvantage.

As a cohort, those thirtysomethings are now entering the most productive period of their lives.

And, as a community, we are now benefiting from those productive years, which are a generational return on the investment made in the education and upbringing of the class of 1983.

What does this tell us? It tells us that what happens in the nursery dictates the future of the community and the economy. It tells us that the real work of Government is to not just govern for today but to plan and invest for the future – to take action to deliver families the services they need today and the opportunities they deserve tomorrow. And it tells us that there are no shortcuts to prosperity and sustainability.

And that's the real challenge for governments – and communities – and community organisations – because the world we live in is changing rapidly, changing faster than at any time since the industrial revolution. If we want to maintain our quality of life, we need to adapt our way of life. And we cannot afford to forget our social obligation to the members of our community suffering from disadvantage.

I look forward to working with your organisations to make our State and nation better and fairer.

The Federal Government's Social Inclusion Agenda

The Hon Julia Gillard MP

**Minister for Education. Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Minister for Social Inclusion. Deputy Prime Minister**

Acknowledgements

Thank you for that warm introduction.

I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Wurundjeri People, and pay my respects to their elders and their laws.

On an occasion like this, when we're coming together to discuss inequality, this act of recognition is more than just symbolism.

Because, as the Prime Minister said in his Apology to the Stolen Generations: acknowledging the original material dispossession of our Indigenous people is the first crucial step towards addressing their economic and social inequality.

I want to also acknowledge:

- Parliamentary colleagues, of which there have been many here, including Brendan O'Connor and Bill Shorten today
- Lin Hatfield-Dodds, President of ACOSS, Dr John Falzon, National CEO of St Vincent de Paul, Pam Cahir, CEO, Early Childhood Australia, Therese Sands, Acting CEO of People With Disabilities Australia, Professor Dan Finn from the University of Portsmouth, UK, and so many other distinguished guests.

I want to thank ACOSS for bringing this broad collection of people and organisations together to renew the fight against inequality and disadvantage.

It's my intention to get to know you better because together we have a huge job ahead of us.

And I want to thank each of you for keeping the ideal of a more inclusive Australia alive over the last decade – when at times it must have seemed that few in Canberra were listening.

It was a time when you were working mostly at cross purposes with a federal government that did not want to hear the contribution of the third sector, the not for profit sector, and deliberately took steps to silence your voice.

It was a time where the public policy debate was not enlivened by an understanding of the nature of entrenched disadvantage and its continued existence despite economic growth.

The result is there for all to see: the continued existence of poverty alongside plenty.

It's a situation in which, as Tony Vinson has told us, the people growing up in Australia's poorest postcodes are up to seven times more likely than the average to suffer from low incomes, long-term unemployment, early school leaving, physical and mental disabilities, prison admissions and to be at risk of child abuse and neglect.

The Social Inclusion challenge matters in all parts of Australia. It matters in remote communities. It matters in regional centres. It matters in the inner city, where entrenched exclusion is all too familiar.

And it matters in many of our new and growing communities, often on the edges of major cities, where economic and population growth have outstripped the growth of social infrastructure and community services, and where isolation and exclusion are a serious problem.

I want all Australians to imagine what growing up in such circumstances means for a child:

- Being chronically behind other children in school
- Being constantly on the move, from one rental home to the next, unable to easily hold down friendships or even worse cycling in and out of homelessness
And missing out on the small but important things that other children take for granted – clothes, holidays, trips to the movies and school excursions

For too many Australians, access to experiences and opportunities that are fundamental to their wellbeing and dignity are simply not available.

In a nation as prosperous as ours this is both morally and economically unacceptable.

And reversing it should – **and now will** – be one of the principal objectives of every level of Australian government.

I haven't come here today to promise you that social exclusion can be abolished overnight – or abolished at all.

But I can promise you this: under the Rudd Government, national economic and social policies will no longer be working at cross purposes.

They will have a single purpose – creating prosperity with fairness for all Australians.

In fact, we believe that fairness and prosperity are inseparable.

In the modern global economy – increasingly dependent on the application of knowledge and skill – leaving individuals and whole communities behind means we are not putting our human capital to its best use.

Consider Australia's current economic circumstances.

The labour market is tight. Economic growth is strong. And these are combining to produce inflation and put pressure on interest rates. We have to find ways to make growth more sustainable.

Plainly, part of the answer is to increase the supply of labour. With unemployment low and participation rates high, this is not easy.

But there are still many people – individuals and communities - excluded from the workforce as a result of poverty, low educational attainment, inadequate skills or disability.

We have to bring them back into the fold.

Unless we address their needs, we will be paying a high price for their marginalisation in the decades ahead.

Simply put: our long term prosperity depends on securing the full social and economic participation of all Australians.

That is why social equity matters.

The importance of social innovation

We have to find new ways to create this equity.

So when it comes to social policy we have to be innovators.

It would have been easy in the face of Commonwealth inaction over the last decade for the welfare sector to have become defensive, putting its energy into defending hard-won past gains.

Happily, this wasn't the case.

Instead, the last decade was marked by continuing policy innovation.

In recent years we've had a stream of new ideas:

- Like the National Housing Affordability Summit's NARI scheme;
- New programs like the Smith Family's Learning for Life
- Intelligent employment initiatives like the Brotherhood's social enterprises
- New research, like the Jesuit and Catholic Social Services' landmark publications on postcode poverty and
- New advocacy, like the ACOSS Australia Fair campaign

A new policy framework – Social Inclusion

All of this, combined with overseas experience, has led to a new framework for national policy based on the powerful idea of social inclusion.

And I'm proud to be the first ever Federal Minister for Social Inclusion.

I don't need to tell you at length what social inclusion means – after all, it was you who brought it to the public spotlight.

From the Government's perspective, it means coordinating policies across national, state and local governments and with the community sector to ensure no Australian is excluded from meaningful participation in the mainstream economic and social life of the country.

It won't be an easy task.

Especially as many of the socially excluded suffer serious and multiple disadvantages that are difficult to address, and have specific problems which do not always command public sympathy.

But together we can make a huge difference.

So what are we proposing?

Our starting point is recognition that while economic policies are important they are not enough on their own.

We all know that a rising tide will not lift everyone up and even when it does lift people up many will struggle to stay afloat.

Some communities will miss out because they lack the capacities and investment to take advantage of economic opportunities.

It's no good, for instance, trying to solve one problem in isolation from others. Hunting for a job for a homeless individual requires you to address their homelessness. Gaining employment for someone with children requires you to address their need for stable, affordable child care. Maintaining employment for a person with chronic ill health requires access to the best of health care to manage their condition.

Our economic policies and our social policies have to be integrated, so that the right support is offered to the right individuals, groups and postcodes.

Our overall goal is to give all Australians the opportunity to:

- Secure a job
- Access services
- Connect with family, friends, work, personal interests and neighbours
- Deal with personal crisis such as ill health, bereavement or the loss of a job and
- Have their voice heard

To achieve this, we will need action on many different fronts.

We have already made challenging policy commitments on several of them.

Early childhood development

The first priority must be in early childhood development – because we know that this yields the greatest returns.

Australia needs to join the 21st Century by creating a new network of early childhood services that can reach out to the children who need help the most.

That's why we've committed to introducing a universal right for all children in the year before formal school to be able to access 15 hours of early learning programs a week, for a minimum of 40 weeks a year, delivered by degree-qualified teachers.

This includes the commitment the Prime Minister made in the Apology to the Stolen Generations that, within five years, every Indigenous four year old in a remote Aboriginal community will have access to a proper early childhood education program, and be engaged in proper pre-literacy and pre-numeracy programs.

To make this a reality, we're going to work with the state and territory governments and child care providers to support the establishment of up to 260 new or expanded long day care centres on school and community sites – including 6 autism-specific centres – all incorporating early learning features.

In co-operation with the Brotherhood of St Laurence, we are extending the Home Interaction program to 50 disadvantaged communities to help the parents of 8,000 at-risk children prepare their youngsters for school.

And in co-operation with Fiona Stanley we are rolling out the Australian Early Development Index to help identify school populations facing special risks and challenges.

And to help parents we are going to extend eligibility for JET child care fee assistance from one to two years of study.

From school to university

While Australia's education system generally performs well, its weakest point is equity, with weak literacy performance in the bottom layer of school students and high drop out rates.

Richard Teese's invaluable work has described how few teenagers from disadvantaged suburbs and regional and remote Australia score highly enough at Year-12 to enter our leading universities.

Given the importance of higher education to Australia's future, it's hard to believe that participation rate of lower socio-economic background students in higher education actually fell from 15.1 percent to 14.6 percent between 2001 and 2006.

We have to turn this around.

To address this, COAG last month agreed to a new National Partnership to boost school education, focussed on the particular educational needs of low socio-economic status schools.

The partnership will improve teacher quality and resourcing, and demand higher standards and expectations of all students.

Crucially, it will examine funding options for schools in the most disadvantaged communities.

We're also going to create 450,000 new vocational training places to create opportunities for post-compulsory education which boost people's skills and economic participation. 175,000 of these places will be for people who are currently outside the workforce.

And at the university level, we're going to make equity an important goal by abolishing full-fee degrees, doubling the number of Commonwealth undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships, halving HECS for students in key disciplines and establishing a new National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education at the University of South Australia.

Tackling homelessness

One of our greatest moral challenges is homelessness.

This is something that has animated the Government from Day One.

The Prime Minister has been willing to say: "I don't want to live in a country where we accept people begging on the streets as somehow acceptable to the Australian way of life."

And Australians right around the country are saying the same thing. I am sure many Australians were surprised and appalled to hear about the shocking data contained in the National Youth Commission's Report *Australia's Homeless Youth*. And I am equally sure Australians said to themselves they want this nation to do better than that for the approximately 22,000 teenagers homeless across our nation.

I am sure tonight many Australians will watch the ABC to learn about the Oasis youth refuge. This program will give an opportunity for Australians to put a face to the statistics, particularly the faces of Owen, Emma, Trent, Haley, Darren, Beau and Chris, the seven young people at the centre of the show.

And many Australians will nod in agreement when Salvation Army Captain Paul Moulds of the Oasis says "Australia isn't the lucky country for every kid. There are heaps of them out there, living on the streets, in squats, under bridges. That's the reality. The challenge is, what are we going to do about it?"

To Paul Moulds question the Rudd Labor Government says we have made a start with \$150 million to create 600 new houses and units for homeless people.

But we need to do more and to build on this start, we are preparing a long-term strategy to reduce homelessness, through a White Paper prepared with the involvement of the Brotherhood's Tony Nicholson and others from the sector.

Assisting people with physical and mental disabilities

Reducing social exclusion means supporting those with physical and mental disabilities in their daily struggle against prejudice and misunderstanding.

In particular, we have to connect them with employment and training opportunities and with the wider community.

To do this, the Minister for Employment, Brendan O'Connor, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, Bill Shorten, are developing, with your input, a comprehensive National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy.

They'll be talking about it here at this conference. It is a crucial component of our social inclusion plans.

Setting national targets and improving policy coordination

Even if implemented independently of each other, these programs would make a huge difference to so many lives.

But to work most effectively they need a new approach to policy coordination and to service delivery.

To ensure this, we are building new 'whole of government' capacity: a new Social Inclusion Committee of Cabinet has been created, chaired by the Prime Minister, co-chaired by me and including senior members of the Government.

The involvement of those outside government is equally essential. To maximise that involvement, we are establishing an Australian Social Inclusion Board to advise the Government on what works and what doesn't; on what the priorities should be, and on how to connect with the concerns of wider communities.

Interest in involvement has been high and membership of this Board will be announced shortly. I'm sure that you would like me to share the details now. But there is a reason why we'll have to wait a little longer: the end of next week will see the 2020 Summit in Canberra, in which social inclusion will be an important theme and some of you will be participating.

Before we absolutely finalise the Board's brief, we will be looking closely at the submissions and other input to the summit, and thinking about how best to reflect the long term priorities that will be discussed there.

But can I say it is a measure of how much our national dialogue is changing that social inclusion is so visibly on the agenda of a major national ideas event.

Pursuing national targets

Federal, State and local government co-operation is needed to end social exclusion and so much of the action will also come from COAG.

We are now beginning to implement a radically different approach to funding and reform through Commonwealth-State collaboration.

Our new approach to funding services reshapes so-called Specific Purpose Payments and introduces National Partnership agreements to fund priority reforms.

The emphasis will be far less on the input controls favoured by the previous Government, and far more on the outputs and outcomes that meet real need.

This new approach will combine greater transparency and flexibility with independent evaluation and benchmarking of results.

To make this work you need social inclusion targets and incentives to meet them.

I have already mentioned some of our new national targets. They also include:

- Lifting overall attainment at Year 12 or equivalent from 74 to 90 per cent;
- Closing the gap in life expectancy, and halving the current gaps in literacy, numeracy and employment for indigenous Australians.
- Halving the number of homeless people turned away from shelters within five years.

I find it very encouraging that, as this week's ACOSS survey shows, the public strongly supports the idea of targets for reducing inequality and social exclusion.

When asked '*Should the Federal Government set targets to improve the living standards of low income and disadvantaged Australians, or not?*' more than 88% replied that we should.

That is exactly what we are doing.

Education, Health and Housing were most likely to be named as the areas where targets should be set.

In the same survey, more than 70 per cent of people said that they support Government plans for a more inclusive society.

This is an important signal of the public expectations that we must meet.

As we develop our social inclusion policies, I expect that we will set further targets.

Where relevant they will be embedded, through the COAG process, in the funding agreements between the Australian, State and Territory Governments.

At their best these goals can help to inspire and galvanise, can help a community to challenge the status quo and to create new possibilities. That is exactly what we intend to do with social inclusion, and we need your support and your partnership to achieve it.

Conclusion

As I said, reducing social exclusion will not be easy.

It will have to be a nation-wide effort:

- Led by the Prime Minister, me as the responsible Minister and the Cabinet Sub-Committee
- Backed by the state Premiers and territory chief ministers; and
- Involving you as leaders in the community, giving advice and running key programs

But I'm confident we can achieve a great deal.

If we are innovative and ambitious, but realistic and attentive to each other's views, we can go a long way towards meeting the nation's pressing social and economic priorities.

Most importantly it can go a long way to making a real difference for disadvantaged and marginalised Australians.

Thank you.

Government relationship with the community services and welfare sector

Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens

**Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector
Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social Inclusion**

Introduction

A strong, vibrant and innovative not-for-profit sector is essential to the social inclusion agenda and to a healthy Australian democracy.

ACOSS has a long and proud history of advocating for those who are socially excluded. It shines a light on disadvantage and on the gap between those who are prospering in our society and the smaller but significant group of those who are not.

I am honoured to be here today at the ACOSS National Conference to begin a conversation about a renewed relationship between the Australian Government and the not-for-profit sector.

As the Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector I am pleased to announce that the Government is moving forward on its election promise to consult on a National Compact between Government and the non-profit sector.

Tomorrow the acting Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, is looking forward to talking with you more particularly about the government's emerging and ambitious social inclusion agenda.

Not-for-profit organisations are important to improving social inclusion

There are around 6,000 organisations in the not-for-profit sector – and more than 700,000 in all sectors.

In the not-for-profit sector there are around 218,000 employees and 1.23 million volunteers.

All up the not-for-profit sector employs around 604,000 people or nearly 7% of the Australian workforce and engages 5.2 million volunteers representing 34% of the adult population.

It is a *phenomenal* force.

The government is critically interested in the not-for-profit sector because it is critically committed to bringing about social inclusion.

Your organisations are in the frontline of that agenda.

Few organisations are better placed than yours to foster solutions to exclusion, promote the value of inclusion and empower communities. The sector is already at the forefront of changing lives and tackling disadvantage.

Not only does the not-for-profit sector deliver services at the pointy end, it has a very important role to play in strengthening and connecting local communities.

But improvements are needed. The Government must improve its approach

It is essential that we restore independence and the right to advocate to the not-for-profit sector as you have an important contribution to make to civil society.

Why? There are at least two good reasons.

Because this government believes a strong and independent not-for-profit sector is important. This government wants to hear what independent organisations have to say. It is keen to hear the views of those organisations who know more than it does about the situation on the ground and about what interventions are working and which are not in improving circumstances for disadvantaged Australians.

Not-for-profit organisations play an important role in identifying gaps or policy shortfalls and drawing these to the attention of governments.

Gag clauses

Responding to the criticism that organisations funded by government did not feel able to speak their own mind, we promised in the election to remove the so-called 'gag' clauses from contracts with not-for-profits and the government has moved quickly to undo the force of these clauses.

Minister Macklin is leading this work and has begun the process by removing 'early warning' clauses from contracts to give peak not-for-profit organisations greater independence and a better voice to represent their sector

Red tape and uncoordinated government funding

The government also knows that it needs to cut the red tape and layers of imposed bureaucratic reporting that can drown and distress even the largest and most sophisticated organisations, making it difficult for them to achieve their aims.

This can be particularly poignant in remote indigenous communities where community leaders who are often struggling with intense disadvantage, lose important time and energy to fulfil reporting requirements of multiple government agencies.

For example, in a year 2000 report of a Western Desert community of 500 people, it was found that elders needed to attend 100 meetings per year as part of the accountability processes for the 40-odd government agencies which funded the operation of their not-for-profit organisation.

In another example, the South Australian Social Inclusion Unit thought it was asking a simple question when it sought to find out how much government funding – Commonwealth, State and Local - was going into a particular region, and to do what. In the end a local NGO which was a recipient of a myriad of grants was best able to draw this picture as the respective agencies could not.

Ensuring Not-for-profits are best able to deliver

But it is a two way street. Just as governments need to continually improve, we see room for continual improvement of the not-for-profit sector's delivery of government services.

The quality and effectiveness of these services is something government relies upon as an important means to improve social inclusion for the most disadvantaged Australians.

Disadvantaged Australians and their communities also critically rely on these services.

The government also needs to be able to assure the Australian public that there is transparency, accountability, efficiency and value for money in the services being delivered.

We want our relationship to not only be based on contractual arrangements, but to be partners in meeting our social inclusion agenda outcomes. This means building a relationship and dialogue that promotes active learning, feedback and accurate reporting.

In pursuing a National Compact with not-for-profit organisations, the government is concerned about supporting the vitality and health of the sector. But to be honest, this is a secondary driver.

The primary goal is linked to our social inclusion agenda and is about ensuring that governments and not-for-profit organisations are focused on achieving outcomes for disadvantaged Australians.

While some formal 'rules of engagement' should serve to strengthen the relationship between sectors, its core outcome must be to improve services and outcomes for the people who use the services that government purchases. This must be paramount as we go forward.

The next step in rebuilding trust and a new relationship with the not-for-profit sector is government's commitment to begin consultation on a National Compact with the sector.

A National Compact can also help in bringing us together to share in this important work, and go forward with shared values.

It will also provide a framework to manage the relationship between sectors, as we shape priorities as part of the National Reform Agenda.

Lessons learned & guiding principles to developing a National Compact

In recent years, governments here in Australia and overseas have sought to define and formalise relationships with the not-for-profit sector.

There is much to learn from these examples. It is not my task or role today to outline what the National Compact will include. It is my task to ensure that the lessons that are learned from implementing other compacts are applied as we go forward. I would like to touch on some of what I see these principles should be.

Three areas of principles for a National Compact

The first of these goes to shared values and to re-build the good relationship between the government and the not-for-profit sector.

- As such, the process around *developing* the National Compact should model a respectful, working in partnership approach;
- Secondly, experience shows it is important to agree to a set of joint goals, with better outcomes for people using non-for-profit services at its heart; and
- Thirdly, it seems equally important to agree on an approach and timetable for addressing issues and concerns so the National Compact can be a driver for positive change.

General points

We all have a responsibility to provide input into the process. I want to ensure all parts of the sector are given the opportunity to do this.

And of course there will need to be discussions with states and territories about these issues.

The Australian not-for-profit sector is both diverse and large. This diversity must be reflected in the National Compact while recognising that all parts of the sector deserve consistent treatment by government agencies.

I understand that ACOSS has expressed an interest in a two-stage process to develop a Compact which recognises the issues for community service providers. I will talk further with ACOSS and the Non-Profit Roundtable to explore options.

The National Compact should build a framework for continual improvement in the relationship.

It must recognise that funding is only one part of the relationship between government and the not-for-profit sector.

It must include a commitment that government will actively work with the not-for-profit sector in the planning of policy and programs and in their development and evaluation. Principles of coordination, collaboration and flexibility should be paramount.

In addition, it must also recognise the critical role played by the sector in connecting people to their communities, strengthening communities from within. This must also include valuing and accrediting volunteers and building a culture of community participation and volunteerism.

The role of the broader not-for-profit sector - such as environment, arts, heritage and sporting organisations - to build a more engaged and inclusive society, should also be recognised.

An appropriate and workable timetable to achieve the National Compact is important, while also recognising a broader review of the sector's regulatory and governance arrangements, will take time.

Let's build on realistic and appropriate outcomes. What do you consider these to be, and what are the benchmarks we can use to move forward?

These principles will form the basis of our discussions as we go forward in developing the National Compact.

I welcome your ongoing feedback and discussion about what other features and topics the National Compact should cover.

We also understand that the not-for-profit sector is facing a range of challenges which are directly impacting on the sector's ability to grow, diversify and adapt. The consultations on the development of the National Compact will bring to light many of these challenges.

Some of these challenges include: attracting and retaining skilled staff, the reliance on part-time employees, capacity building and infrastructure limits, and building alliances and networks of services and volunteers.

Public policy approaches which have led to the increased use of competitive tendering, contractual arrangements and purchaser-provider relationships often mean that voluntary management committees and boards need new skills to manage increasingly complex relationships with Government.

We are focussed on making a difference for the people we are looking to empower and whose lives must be improved – and we will be taking tough decisions about how we fund support services for them.

In short, if the results aren't there, then we will try something else.

Improved governance in the not-for-profit sector will be assisted by our spending effort on gaining a better understanding of the sector itself, and its contribution to Australia's society and economy.

The not-for-profit sector is a significant economy – measuring the contribution of the third sector to the Australian economy is high on the government's agenda. To do this we will be looking at new tools to understand the productive input of the sector.

In coming months we will be talking further with the sector and State and Territory Governments about some of these challenges and how we can resolve these issues as part of our commitment to constructive Commonwealth/State relations.

Social Inclusion and next steps

Having restored advocacy as a key role of the sector, and as we work towards a National Compact, there are some significant ways that the sector can start to work for the social inclusion agenda:

Firstly

– by helping to change the attitudes and perceptions that often underpin exclusion – those doing the excluding, as well as those experiencing it;

Secondly

– by opening up public space around social inclusion – by fostering discussion and policy development within the sector that creates an enabling environment – building trust between those organisations that have been competitively tendering against each other, in the interest of finding common ground;

Thirdly

– by promoting innovation – the sector is best placed to identify and experiment with new approaches, serve as a clearing house for promising ideas, and vehicles for diffusing innovations, and;

Fourthly

– by serving as a bridge among organisations and communities – reaching across social or economic divides in the interests of resolving apparent conflicts and forging new alliances.

Conclusion

I am excited by the prospect of working with the sector to develop a National Compact. To help ensure that the process will be the best it can be, I have asked ACOSS to assist the government by organising consultations with its members and to provide venues and logistical support to enable this to take place around the country. I expect to be attending most, if not all, of these consultations.

Consultations are likely to begin in mid-to-late-June, and continue until mid-August. I am looking to report back to government in early September, and will take the opportunity to also work with the forthcoming Australian Social Inclusion Board in developing my thinking.

I look forward to continued discussion with you on all aspects of policy, and wish you all the very best for your Conference.

Thank you.

Supporting employment and participation

The Hon Brendan O'Connor MP

Minister for Employment Participation

I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Wurundjeri People, and pay my respects to their elders and their laws.

It is my pleasure to be here today with you to continue the discussion about how we can work together to reduce poverty and inequality in Australia.

And I would like to thank ACOSS for organising this timely conference.

I also want to acknowledge and thank you. Not only for the work you do each day to help people and improve their quality of life, but your willingness to contribute to this dialogue.

Many of you will have heard the Deputy Prime Minister articulate today the Government's perspective on social inclusion.

A critical part of that social inclusion agenda is ensuring that all Australians have the opportunity to secure a job.

We know that work is **fundamental** to economic and social prosperity. It helps to define us as individuals - and is often the first question asked of someone after being introduced.

Work, along with family and community, gives meaning to life. It creates opportunities for financial independence and personal fulfilment and benefits local communities, regions and the broader economy. Communities are more prosperous and cohesive when those who **can** work **are** working.

And while our nation has enjoyed strong economic growth this growth hasn't been uniform. In fact over the life of the Howard Government, the proportion of long-term income support recipients doubled.

And while the overall number of jobless families has fallen over the years, in June 2007, jobless families still accounted for 13.5 per cent of families with dependent children under-14. This equates to 303,000 jobless families and over 500,000 children.

The long term implications of such a statistic will impact upon numerous social and economic indicators for the rest of these children's lives, and their children's lives.

I think we are right to ask how this could have happened, with strong economic growth, low levels of unemployment and wide-spread skills shortages.

What we do know is the previous Government neglected those who face the greatest barriers to gaining employment over their year term. They did little to adjust employment programs to suit today's workforce landscape.

Assisting these marginalised job seekers is a key priority of our social inclusion agenda. But increasing employment participation is also critical to Australia's future prosperity. Australia simply cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

The Government believes that without a meaningful support network that genuinely helps people find jobs, too many Australians will be excluded from these opportunities.

More than 700,000 people are on Disability Support Pension. We need to make sure that those who **can** work **are** working, and that those who can't are adequately supported.

That's why we are working on a National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy.

This strategy will put forward clear and practical steps needed to overcome the barriers that people face in gaining and keeping employment.

We want to encourage innovative and creative ways to help people gain and retain work.

That's why the strategy will be developed in close consultation with people with disability and mental illness, employers and experts.

The Government will be releasing a discussion paper next week, which will outline the scope of the strategy.

In addition to face-to-face consultations, there will be an opportunity for people to make written submissions until the end of June.

The consultative process illustrates how, at its heart, social inclusion is as much about how we do things, as it is about what we do.

And this Government believes that we need to work closely with the community and community leaders to achieve our goals.

I have also used this approach in reshaping our employment services.

First, there are the users of the employment system.

Job seekers have not been backward in expressing their views of the current system, telling us in no uncertain terms what works and what doesn't.

They have explained the difference a good case manager makes in helping them achieve their employment goals.

And, perhaps more frequently, I am told of the system's frustrating inflexibility.

But I believe that employers have also been a neglected player in our employment services system.

If we want the most disadvantaged of Australians to find jobs, we need to make sure that employers are getting what they need from our jobseekers.

And finally, but no less importantly, as experts who represent people on the margins of our society, many of you have already provided critical insights as to the problems in our employment services. I want to assure you that I have heard what you are saying.

While I could never expect a single voice from such a diverse range of interests - there are some key themes emerging from the more than 260 plus submissions I have received.

I don't think many will surprise anyone here:

The red tape hamstringing innovation and client services

That the 'work first' approach is too narrow and prevents people accessing training and developing new skills

And the ineffective and counter productive compliance regime.

The Government is carefully considering how we can achieve a better balance in managing our employment contracts to ensure that providers do not, as they have indicated to me, spend potential client time on paperwork.

We are taking the first steps to address the training and skills deficit in employment services, with the provision of 175,000 training places to the most marginalised jobseekers, with 20,000 of those places to be taken up before June.

We have also been told that the former Liberal Government's compliance system is counterproductive.

I have been told that once suspended from receiving income, people are not sighted again by their employment services provider, at least for the duration of the penalty. How can that be a productive way to re-engage people?

There have been 31,789 eight-week non-payment periods imposed from July 2007 to March 2008 – more than double than for the whole of the last financial year.

This is a significant increase and cause for concern.

A Melbourne Citymission survey of **186** vulnerable job seekers found that over half had at some stage been breached or had their payments suspended by Centrelink.

Of those living in insecure housing, **72 per cent** had experienced a suspension or breach and as a result, **almost half** were unable to pay for necessities such as food, and **a quarter** were unable to pay for accommodation.

The survey also found that **13 per cent** reported resorting to illegal activities such as petty theft and fare evasion.

An earlier report on the impact of breaching on income support customers by the Social Policy Research Centre also found that **30 per cent** of people lost their accommodation as a result of receiving an eight week penalty.

Quite apart from the impact on each of the individuals concerned, there are obvious flow-on effects to the State and the community sector.

Providers have told us they would like greater capacity to use their judgement in how to engage job seekers rather than automatic compliance action.

I am working closely with my colleague the Minister for Human Services, Senator Joe Ludwig, on ways which we can ensure that the system is administered compassionately and fairly.

We are exploring how we can reinforce the discretion that providers and Centrelink have when considering participation failures, in particular their ability to take into account a client's individual circumstances.

I must point out, however, that the current compliance regime is enshrined in legislation and any significant changes will take time to address.

While I cannot pre-empt the final outcomes of the employment services review, I can say that we want to maintain a strong, effective compliance regime with consequences for **non-genuine** job seekers, we also want a system that encourages participation and employment.

In the spirit of making a more effective and fairer system, I have asked for a report into my Department's social security appeals arrangements to ensure that our approach is reasonable, and avoids costly and unnecessary litigation.

This report – undertaken by a committee of departmental and welfare advocates – has been recently completed and I will be releasing that shortly

The lesson we have learned in reviewing many of the **mistakes** of the previous Government is that it is critical that even after the initial glow of new government passes (and of course, I hope it never passes), that we continually evaluate and refine what we do.

Conclusion

There is much work ahead of us to ensure we create a system that helps jobseekers overcome the barriers they face in not only finding jobs but also retaining employment.

We want to continue to hear your views and thoughts on how employment services can be improved.

I can assure you that the Rudd Government regards the community's views and suggestions as **central** to developing a better employment system for all Australians.

And I genuinely look forward to hearing both about the goals, benchmarks and targets you think we need; and the strategies you think we need to achieve them.

Workshop on Indigenous Communities

1. The strengths and opportunities of the social inclusion agenda

Conference delegates engaged in a discussion of the strengths and opportunities of the social inclusion agenda, identifying the following opportunities:

- Opportunity for change – with a new government and a new direction, the rhetoric is good and it is hoped this will translate into action on the ground;
- Opportunity to have robust discussions about how to make people's lives better;
- Opportunity to develop localised approaches;
- Opportunity to develop evidence-based policy;
- Opportunity to focus upon the totality of Aboriginal peoples' needs across Australia;
- Opportunity for more resources to be allocated to key areas of need;
- Opportunity for the agenda to be driven from the community rather than by Government (bottom up rather than top down);
- Opportunity for mature and robust debate about human rights: delegates welcomed Rudd's announcement of endorsement of *Declaration on the Rights on Indigenous People*. Delegates stressed that an examination of social inclusion needs to recognise the international dimension as well as the national and local;
- Opportunity to create a new National Indigenous Representative Body which is responsive to community input, respected and listened to by Government and is able to work cooperatively with the community sector;
- Opportunity to review funding structures and programs, creating longer term funding cycles and more core/ongoing funding such that community organisations have the capacity to attract and retain staff;
- Opportunity to develop social enterprise as a way to increase social inclusion;
- Opportunity to have debate about the intersection between poverty and social inclusion;
- Opportunity to consider the role of development in social inclusion;
- Opportunity to engage business;
- Opportunity to develop coordinated Commonwealth, State/Territory and Local Government responses.

2. Social exclusion: Who? How? Where? Why?

Who is excluded?

Delegates discussed the exclusion of Indigenous people, as a whole, from many social, economic and political opportunities and benefits. They identified the following groups as being excluded (the list is non-exhaustive):

- *Aboriginal people* – from benefits of national prosperity, from political processes.
- *Aboriginal people with disability* – double discrimination: Conversations around health and poverty often overlook disability despite very high rates of disabilities in Indigenous communities (at 37%, not including people with mental illness). Most Aboriginal people have difficulty meeting the costs of their disability or accessing the necessary services eg housing modifications, accessible transport. Many Aboriginal children with a disability are not attending school. Barriers to employment. Large numbers of people with mental illnesses, learning disabilities and acquired brain injury in criminal justice system.
- *Aboriginal children* – Indigenous children remain the most educationally disadvantaged students in the country. They are excluded from early childhood development services, childcare, pre-school. Barriers to education include the lack of access to public transport and adequate housing, poor health, overcrowding, family and domestic violence and lack of identification. Gap between educational outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students widens as children get older. Difficulty accessing tutorial assistance. Recurrent funding frozen at 2004 levels. As many as 7000 children in NT are missing out on education. Lack of Indigenous educators. Low levels of Indigenous teaching staff – 0.87%. Teacher education around Indigenous education very limited.
- Young people in *juvenile justice* services.

How and why are people excluded?

Delegates identified the following ways by which Indigenous people are excluded:

- By bureaucratic processes which are non-consultative;
- By the failure to recognise and work with local communities to overcome barriers - causing a breakdown in trust;
- By institutional racism;
- By the lack of transport;
- By inadequate access to housing;
- By the lack of access to translators;
- By the lack of access to health services;
- By the lack of infrastructure in communities;
- By the emphasis on mainstreaming without ensuring the cultural appropriateness of mainstream services. Participants questioned the idea that mainstream organisations need specific Indigenous funding in order to be accessible.

Where are people excluded?

- Indigenous people are excluded from social and economic participation in all geographic areas of the country: urban, regional and remote areas.
- Although the ways in which people are excluded vary across these areas, the Indigenous population experiences social exclusion regardless of place of residence through racism, discrimination, poverty, inequality etc.
- Important to recognise the differences between urban, regional and remote Indigenous populations and develop localised policy solutions, while recognising the shared history, culture and experience of colonialism, racism and discrimination.

3. What are the goals, benchmarks and targets for the Commonwealth Government to implement?

The goals and targets in the NACCHO/Oxfam 'Equality in Health' Close the Gap Plan, were considered. These goals include:

1. Increase core funding for culturally appropriate primary health care to help bridge the gap in health standards;
2. Increase the number, effectiveness and training of health practitioners working within Aboriginal health settings, and build capacity of the Indigenous health workforce;
3. Improve the responsiveness of mainstream health services and programs to Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander health needs;
4. Implement a strategic maternal and child health plan;
5. Provide greater support for Indigenous specific- population programs for chronic and communicable disease;
6. Increase funding and support for health promotion regarding nutrition, physical activity, fresh food and healthy lifestyles;
7. Increase funding and support for adequate housing and environmental health;
8. Utilise existing and new indicators to monitor the right to health.

Other suggested goals were to:

- Increase the proportion of services that are Indigenous owned and controlled;
- Increase the number of Indigenous interpreters in the health and legal systems;
- Increase the number of Indigenous doctors and health professionals;
- Appoint an Indigenous representative board for each identified region;
- Develop a coordinated, regular, transparent Government consultation process with Indigenous communities to reduce multiple, overlapping consultative processes;
- Increase the school retention rate for Indigenous young people;
- Reduce the proportion of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system;
- Reduce the number of Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions;

- Reduce the number of Indigenous households living below the poverty line;
- Ensure that all Indigenous children have access to early childhood education and culturally appropriate primary and secondary education;
- Reduce the number of Indigenous people suffering from preventable diseases;
- Reduce the rate of infant mortality;
- Reduce the life expectancy gap.

Comments/Summary

Participants were generally reluctant to specify precise goals and targets, feeling that this should be left to the 'experts' and informed by updated data and research. Those listed above were suggested by the rapporteurs and the group thought they were uncontentious.

A number of challenges and issues associated with setting benchmarks and targets were discussed, including:

- Poor data collection, the absence of current data in some areas making it difficult to set benchmarks;
- The importance of a human rights basis to benchmarks/targets;
- The need to combat institutional racism (how to measure progress);
- The need to include social and emotional wellbeing and mental health within health targets;
- The importance of developing targets consultatively at a community level with mechanisms for community monitoring of progress;
- The relationship between benchmarks and targets and land rights, treaty etc;
- How to measure the quality of the process (not just the policy outcomes);
- How to measure outcomes at a local, as well as national, level;
- How to ensure long term commitments and monitoring, which extends beyond the electoral cycle;
- The possibility of underpinning benchmarks by minimum standards, linked to a rights framework.

4. What broad strategies might be adopted to achieve these targets and what data is needed to measure progress?

Delegates emphasised the need for national targets to be achieved through *local* solutions and developed through consultation. They stressed the importance of whole of government and whole of community approaches. They also emphasised the need to learn from strong resilient communities – there being many positive case studies which can inform policy and program development.

Delegates also expressed some concern that social inclusion might be equated with social homogeneity, and stressed the need to ensure that respect for diversity forms a key part of a social inclusion agenda.

A number of strategies and programs were suggested, including:

- The Creation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representative Body;
- The enactment of a Bill of Rights;
- The appointment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner in each state and territory;
- An increase of funding to Indigenous education, expanded access to tutorial assistance and programs to attract Indigenous teaching staff;
- The re-establishment of a body to ensure Indigenous involvement in the delivery of educational services;
- Programs to encourage the involvement of Indigenous parents in their children's education;
- The provision of hearing assistance in schools to counter the effects of hearing loss due to ear infections and diseases;
- The introduction of performance indicators for director generals, regional directors etc to ensure accountability for all levels of Government.

Workshop on Health

1. The strengths and opportunities of the social inclusion agenda

Workshop participants engaged in a discussion of the strengths and opportunities of the social inclusion agenda, identifying the following opportunities:

- Tackling the systemic causes of social exclusion which leads to the social gradient of health; that is the link between health and wealth;
- Tackling deep disadvantage such as that faced by Indigenous people, prisoners and generations of families with health and social problems;
- Tackling the causes of disadvantage across Commonwealth/State/Local Government boundaries;
- Ensuring cross-governmental and intergovernmental policies interact to achieve social inclusion, rather than working against each other;
- Creation of health promotion strategies that target groups of people who are socially excluded;
- Ensuring disadvantaged people who are sick can access high quality health care as needed;
- Including and supporting health consumers in health care and health policy;
- Reviewing funding structures and programs to ensure services and supports meet the needs of socially excluded groups;
- Reviewing the health and community services workforce – who, how many, expertise etc

2. Social exclusion: Who? How? Where? Why?

Who is excluded?

Workshop participants noted that we need to be careful in defining who is excluded, what groups are excluded, characterising communities that are excluded.

Groups excluded include:

- Prisoners – very often people who experience multiple disadvantages, including low income, illness (both mental and physical);
- Indigenous people;
- Gay and Lesbian people;
- People who cannot read;
- People in rural communities;
- People on low incomes;
- People with history of poor health in the family.

Why excluded?

- Public attitudes – ‘you get what you deserve’;
- Assumption that Indigenous people are solely responsible for their own health;
- Assumption that you can separate mental and physical health;
- Assumption that chronic disease management is a health provider responsibility;
- Assumption that oral health is merely cosmetic;
- Assumption that health promotion messages reach people with low literacy;
- Assumption that health services are the prime determinants of health and wellbeing;
- Distribution of health resources is inequitable;
- Too many disconnected programs and policies;
- Health system is good at measuring throughputs, but not outcomes;
- Patient co-payments are a barrier to care for many low income people;
- Failure of system of supports and services, including education and transport;
- Bureaucratic paternalism;
- Institutionalised racism;
- Lack of political will to tackle the problems and implement the solutions;
- Lack of opportunity for Indigenous self-determination;
- Lack of real choices and control over resources;
- Ancestors and history;
- Health status;
- Social status;
- Inability to read;
- Experience of family problems;
- It is assumed in health promotion and prevention that if people are told what to do they will act rationally and do it;
- It is too often assumed that focussing on one intervention will solve all problems;
- Lack of honesty about fallacy of universal and free health care in Australia.

How excluded?

- Unable to work or do other things because attending to health problems of themselves and/or family members;
- Time and resources taken to look after health problems exacerbated by distance from services and inadequate transport links;

- The experience and knowledge of those affected by exclusion is not valued in how policy and services are developed and delivered;
- Distance from services;
- Racial discrimination;
- Cost of services.

3. What are the goals, benchmarks and targets for the Commonwealth Government to implement?

- Reduction in level of chronic disease in people under 40 years of age;
- Reduction in occasions of service for people with a mental illness;
- Increased satisfaction of treatment from episode of care;
- Close life expectancy gap between top 10% and bottom 10%;
- Same level of care coordination for specific groups, especially people with more complex needs.

4. What broad strategies might be adopted to achieve these targets and what data is needed to measure progress?

Each participant was asked to name one such strategy

- Care coordinator for every health service;
- Set limits on for-profit provision of health services;
- Increased funding for consumer advocacy, with increased pressure on State Governments to deliver this;
- Ensure publicly funded not-for-profit organisations provide a full range of services, eg abortion;
- Multi-disciplinary approach to mental/physical health;
- Focus on self-management support;
- Listen to those affected by exclusion and do it right;
- Co-locating health services with other services;
- Use consumer expertise, e.g. in regard to stigma;
- Ensure allied and psychological services in rural areas;
- Build on what works in terms of enablers of participation, including strengths of the community sector;
- Clarify funding arrangements – what's in and what's out of Medicare;
- Identify priorities for universal coverage and articulate reasons through national dialogue;

- Overcome Indigenous disadvantage – action on headline indicators;
- Identify structural barriers to access as people move through the system;
- Reconceptualise how we see end users – as citizens, residents and taxpayers;
- Focus on social exclusion of older people;
- Reporting on outcomes and efficiency;
- Consult frontline workers on everyday issues;
- Tackle the financial barriers to health care;
- Clarify where health system sits in broader human services system;
- Ensure unorganised interests are taken into account in developing social inclusion agenda. Learn lessons from response to HIV/AIDS and Indigenous health.

Workshop on Supporting Employment & Participation

1. Strengths and opportunities

- Social Inclusion allows us to develop policies and programs that are people centred and based on encouragement, reward, dignity and choice;
- Sector can be bold – opportunity to “dream” about what the Jobs Network might be;
- Allows a focus on compounding problems;
- Shine some light on where people have fallen through the cracks;
- Promote greater collaboration rather than competition - more effective ways of working together;
- Ability to work more flexibly to meet individual needs rather than the “cookie cutter” approach – people centred;
- Focus on job retention as well as finding jobs;
- Opportunity to broaden view of work and recognise different needs at different points in people’s life courses;
- Opportunity to redefine rights and responsibilities;
- While there are many strengths and opportunities we must also recognise and develop strategies to deal with weaknesses and threats (internal to the sector as well as externally).

2. Social exclusion: Who? Where? How?

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders;
- People with disabilities;
- People doing unpaid work (especially those with caring responsibilities);
- Survivors of domestic and family violence.

How are people excluded?

- Unpaid work is not valued – different views about what work is, is not valued/recognised;
- “Cookie cutter” approach fails to take into account individuals, where they are in their life course, their relationships and circumstances and their needs;
- Our own language and practices – we still use the frame of “providers and clients/users” – we need to see the “them” in “us” and the “us” in “them”.

Where are people excluded?

- Location - everywhere!
- The current system treats getting a job as an end rather than the means to improving social inclusion and moving towards a fairer society. Attachment to the paid labour market is an important part of the solution but a broader view is also needed so that individual needs and circumstances can be taken into account.

3. What are the goals, benchmarks and targets for the Commonwealth Government to implement?

There is a need to ensure that targets and indicators focus on broader society/community features and not just on individuals. Targets also apply to the sector so our capacity is an issue.

- Specific floor targets for different population groups as well as general population goals;
- Localised targets;
- Long term view;
- “Participation” rather than “unemployment” as the focus;
- Economic development in regions is important – precondition to jobs being available (address the demand side of the equation as well);
- Quality of jobs as well as quantity;
- Targets for institutions as well as people.

4. What broad strategies are needed to have people included and meet targets?

What strategies are needed?

- Learn from system users – improve system users engagement and trust to deliver better outcomes;
- People centred.

What kind of programs are needed?

- People centred;
- Programs that provide encouragement, reward, dignity and choice.

What kind of data is needed?

- “Journey mapping” by system users – time, cost of waiting, type of contact, who, etc.

5. Where to now?

The group believed we needed to engage with Government around the issues raised. There was recognition that, as a sector, we also have much to do to ensure our capacity to deliver on a social inclusion agenda. This is broader than just having the right number of the right people but also in ensuring our own practices reflect the values we expect the Government to commit to.

Workshop on inclusive and diverse communities

1. Strengths and opportunities

- Opportunity for Government to show leadership in social inclusion;
- Opportunity to participate in the creation of a national identity;
- Opportunity to revisit the development of a human rights charter;
- Need to acknowledge the damage that has been done to disadvantaged groups eg Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) groups in the last 10yrs;
- Need to promote discussion of human rights in our schools, communities;
- Need to make sure inclusion includes diversity;
- 'We can't grow without acknowledging the past'.

2. Social exclusion: Who? Where? How?

Who is excluded?

- People with disability;
- Refugees;
- Migrants;
- Asylum Seekers;
- Adults who were children in institutional care;
- People who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual;
- Older people;
- People who are HIV positive;
- People on Temporary Protection Visas;
- Those who look different, speak differently, dress differently;
- Those who can't communicate eg people with disability, refugees.

How are people excluded?

- Lack of information (ie in language);
- Transport/infrastructure/services;
- Lack of networks/family;
- Lack of childcare;
- Lack of access to, and skills in, information technology;

- Lack of representation in government, on boards etc;
- Through legislation eg gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual.

Where are people excluded?

- More research needs to be done;
- Not always geographical.

Why are people excluded?

- Community attitudes play a big part as to whether people are included or not eg at work;
- Community must say 'we will not tolerate' exclusion;
- Models that are developed are for the norm and do not take diversity into account.

3. What are the goals, benchmarks and targets for the Commonwealth Government to implement?

- Can't identify them until we have data;
- Targets around home ownership for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Refugee groups;
- Targets on employment rates for diverse groups;
- Benchmarks for access and language;
- 90% of newly arrived refugees being able to speak/learn English after 18mths of arrival.

Infrastructure

- Measures of strength of communities;
- Social capital measures/indicators - measure assets;
- Measure of / percentage of community organisations that have adequate level of funding;
- Percentage of community organisations that have adequate data management / infrastructure;
- Increase in employee retention rates from 2yrs to 5yrs;
- Measurement of regional community based organisations;
- Level of corporate / funding /profits into community strategies / strengths.

Health and housing

- Access to emergency supported accommodation for individuals and families;
- Decrease in number of people sleeping rough;
- Increase in number of consumers reporting their need for culturally sensitive supported accommodation is met (cultural meaning ethnicity, sexuality, religious, etc);
- Increase in interpreters available when required to assist;
- Percentage of people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities with proficiency in English;
- Decrease in reports of discrimination by health systems, organisations and professionals.

Employment and education

- Equal outcomes for diverse groups;
- Equity of access;
- Any framework should include minimum standards and attention to relativities.

1. What broad strategies are needed to have people included and meet targets?

- Better systems/compliance mechanisms to ensure 100% marginalised ethno-specific funding spent on that group (eg aged care, health, human services);
- All Government funding should incorporate key performance indicators to ensure culturally appropriate delivery of services and reporting on it;
- Supporting resources and structures that enable marginalised people to speak and communicate – voice and access to issues and representation;
- Provide language/interpreter services to all agencies and encourage use;
- Requirement for services to ensure everyone to undertake accredited cultural competency training;
- Incorporating human rights instruments into domestic law;
- Social Inclusion Impact Statement required for all Government programs and services;
- Funding from carbon trading scheme to build capacity of community sector to address climate change.

Legislative change

- Removal of citizenship test;
- Remove all legislation which discriminates against people on the basis of sexuality;

- Recording the hurt that has been done;
- Anti-racism/phobia education;
- Review of immigration/settlement policies;
- Changes for people on Temporary Protection Visas.

Health and housing

- Social housing should be treated as a right for people with disability despite modest income;
- Strategies to improve health professionals attitudes and behaviour to diverse communities, including religious, CALD, GLBT and other differences;
- Increasing the use of local communities and affected sub populations in developing and delivering and planning health services;
- Increase in meaningful dialogue with affected communities in development of health policy through formal and informal structures;
- Improving baseline data against which performance can be measured;
- Increase use of social marketing to educate the community about diversity and social issues;
- Commence a community discussion about social inclusion and institute a 'Decade of Community 2010 – 2020'.

Employment and education

- People given opportunity for participation but also freedom of choice in participation;
- Anti-racism strategies;
- Anti-homophobia strategies;
- Review of immigration policies focussing on social inclusion and productive diversity;
- Note that participation in employment and education does not necessarily equal social inclusion.

Workshop on housing and homelessness

1. The strengths and opportunities of the social inclusion agenda

- Opportunities – the agenda has changed and talking about inclusion is a big shift;
- Strengths in public housing – 370,000 households but Commonwealth contribution declining;
- Strengths in SAAP sector but financial and workforce issues;
- National Affordable Housing Agreement has a good focus on supply and on outcomes. Now getting out of tight input control. Will link with rent assistance and Indigenous accommodation program;
- National affordability rental scheme – seeks private investment in rental property;
- Green paper on homelessness;
- A place to call home for homeless support strategy – 600 homes built/acquired in next 5 Years plus 12 months support. Commonwealth contribution to stock. Expect States to provide additional resources to provide support;
- Finding ways to bring Job Network to the table - currently an employment review happening;
- Opportunity to look at development costs;
- Opportunity to look at land supply issues, including release of Commonwealth land;
- Up to States/Territories as to how things are brought together on ground eg disability and mental health accommodation which will come from other buckets;
- National partnership payments on top of SPPs;
- Importance of good outcome indicators;
- Government keen to consult;
- Important to put a floor under housing system as a whole not just social housing. There are chronic long term structural problems. Not lose sight of disadvantage but housing is a bigger issue than just in relation to disadvantage;
- Need to work together better - hope based approach;
- There is a risk that the language of poverty will be used instead of social exclusion;
- There is a risk in the rush to change everything; many things we do that are OK. Hang on to them;
- Not import too directly from UK and Europe because different history;
- Risks – implementation processes. Concern about transparency of measuring outcomes – need some independent audit process – is it really working? Eg Redfern as an area of disadvantage no longer.

2. Social exclusion: Who? How? Where? Why?

Who is excluded?

- Indigenous people;
- People living in rural areas;
- Young people and children;

How and why are people excluded?

- People living in rural areas don't have the support services;
- Children not counted in data sets or taken into account in funding;
- Young people's vulnerability not taken into account;
- Duration of support for young too limited (13 weeks);

Where are people excluded?

- Rural areas

3. What are the goals, benchmarks and targets for the Commonwealth Government to implement?

- Should not just be limited to homeless people;
- Percentage of people living in housing stress while still receiving rent assistance;
- Success of SAAP should be measured on percentage of people who move into secure accommodation;
- Homelessness reduction targets for specific groups eg rough sleepers, domestic violence.

4. What broad strategies might be adopted to achieve these targets and what data is needed to measure progress?

- Distinct response needed for those experiencing "deep exclusion" – not just a broader viability issue;
- Support issues – very intensive and difficult to bring it together. Needs to be long term and some for many years. Look at interface with Home and Community Care;
- Housing for people with long term disability/mental health problems and low income carers who are also locked out of housing market;
- Workforce issues;

- Importance of involving people with practical knowledge rather than academics;
- Importance of talking with people who are homeless;
- Rural issues - model for support services in Coffs Harbour worth exploring;
- Public service encouraged to engage;
- Opportunities to work with local government. Working through local environmental plan. Benefits plan where 50% of profit to go back into affordable housing trust managed by housing provider. State Government support lacking in NSW;
- Each local government to have a housing plan;
- Need to work with and through the States and Territories;
- Need to ensure health system does not use homeless system as dumping ground;
- Need to ensure that States/Territories do not bias priorities towards areas of pressure for State/Territory Government eg child protection;
- Minimum levels of spending on key areas under reformed SPP system to safeguard against State/Territory Governments directing funding to areas of most pressing State/Territory political need – eg hospitals.

Workshop on early childhood development

1. The strengths and opportunities of the social inclusion agenda

- Opportunity for all children to have a right to a positive and nurturing early childhood experience within family, community and culture;
- Opportunity for families to have access to a universal early childhood support system which can support them and their children's development through flexible and multiple access points.

2. Social exclusion: Who? How? Where? Why?

Who is excluded?

- Children and families living in poverty;
- Indigenous children and families.

How and why are people excluded?

- Poverty is one of the most significant inhibitor to optimum childhood experiences and drives exclusion;
- Removal of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children from their families. These children are six times more likely to be removed from their families for child protection reasons (1/2 of these occurred within the last decade) than non-Indigenous children.

3. What are the goals, benchmarks and targets for the Commonwealth Government to implement?

- Targets for the reduction of poverty, including targets to increase the number of children who do not live in poverty;
- Target for reduction in the number/proportion of children coming into out-of-home care (?);
- Target for reduction in the number/proportion of children with substantiated child protection notifications;
- Target for an increase in the number/proportion of children born at a health weight;
- Target for all four year olds to have access to a proper early childhood program;
- Targets for increasing the number of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people delivering programs;

- Targets for increasing the proportion of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander childhood programs that incorporate their culture and languages;
- Targets for increasing the proportion of early childhood programs that include Indigenous languages and culturally based programs;
- Within two terms of the Commonwealth Government, the level of access for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children to be the same as that enjoyed by other Australians families for Commonwealth funded:
 - Childcare
 - Family support / parenting
 - Early childhood programs
- Targets for the development of early childhood programs and curricula that draw upon the best of Indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge on child-development and child rearing.

4. What broad strategies might be adopted to achieve these targets and what data is needed to measure progress?

- Develop and implement a national anti-poverty strategy;
- Early childhood programs and curriculum must be developed drawing upon the best of indigenous and non- indigenous knowledge on child-development and child rearing;
- Parenting to be acknowledged as an essential and important role and needs to be financially supported;
- Develop and implement a national community development and capacity plan;
- Develop a national approach to child and family wellbeing with a focus upon early intervention and prevention;
- Training and employment of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people to deliver programs.

Workshop on Youth Transitions

1. The strengths and opportunities of the social inclusion agenda

- Opportunities to focus on areas where we are clearly behind comparable countries, such as school completion and, in particular, Indigenous school completion.
- Opportunities to reframe measures of social and economic progress, so that we don't only measure economic participation (eg employment) but also consider broader measures of health, wellbeing and participation in society.
- Opportunities to reframe education outcomes, so when considering what is a high-performing school we don't just look at 'league tables' based on final exam results, but measure the success of schools in maintaining the engagement of all students.
- Opportunities to fill some obvious gaps in services for young people, such as (1) comprehensive funding for the transition from school to further education, training, employment or other social participation, with recognition that this isn't a one-off, one-way transition and that some young people may return to school; and (2) access to the Job Network for young people who are not eligible for income support.
- Opportunities to put an emphasis on access and equity in the allocation of resources in the apprenticeship & traineeship system.
- Opportunities to address the irrationality of some aspects of the current funding mix—for example, the fact that we fund programs for young people who have disengaged from schooling at a lower per capita rate than we fund years 11 and 12, despite the fact that we know that young people who have disengaged are likely to have more complex needs.
- Opportunities for a greater focus on early intervention, so that as well as funding programs for young people who have disengaged, we get better at identifying early signs of disengagement, and responding. (We recognise that in many cases, this will mean responding in primary school).
- Opportunities to ensure that young people understand and exercise their rights—for example, rights as tenants.

Summary:

In summary, we recognised that young people at risk of marginalisation are potentially significant beneficiaries of the social inclusion agenda, but that it is critical that we get the definitions, goals and targets right, in order to ensure that new programs and funding have an impact on reducing disadvantage.

2. Social exclusion: Who? How? Where? Why?

Who is excluded?

We did not seek to develop a comprehensive definition of socially excluded young people, nor to list all of the factors that contribute to social exclusion. We did, however recognise that:

- the point of disengagement from school is a key transition influencing social exclusion, and that for many young people who experience extreme social exclusion, this occurs in primary school, or at the point of transition from primary school to high school;
- there is a strong relationship between homelessness and social exclusion of young people;
- children and young people from families on low incomes are themselves at high risk of social exclusion;
- young people who are below the age of independence for Centrelink payments who experience family breakdown are at particularly high risk, because they often experience difficulty accessing payments;
- Indigenous people, and people with experience in Indigenous policy and programs, were under-represented in our group, so we recognised that our analysis failed to adequately address issues of social exclusion of Indigenous young people; and
- we also recognised a lack of experience in rural and remote communities, which limited our analysis of social exclusion in rural and remote communities.

How are people excluded?

The key dimensions of social exclusion that we identified were:

- exclusion from the education system, including from public schools;
- streaming of students within the education system, so that many marginalised young people (in particular, young people with challenging behaviour) are removed from mainstream environments;
- exclusion from activities within the education system that are dependent on payment of fees—for example, excursions;
- exclusion from safe and secure housing, due to a lack of appropriate housing and accommodation models for young people (including young people exiting the care and protection system);
- exclusion from other parts of the service system due to eligibility requirements that are too narrowly focused—for example, vocational education and training programs that focus on skill gaps, with limited capacity for consideration of the particular needs and capacities of individual young people.

Where are people excluded?

Location: this issue was not addressed in any detail.

3. What are the goals, benchmarks and targets for the Commonwealth Government to implement?

Our group did not identify a comprehensive list of goals, targets or indicators. Rather, we identified a number of factors to be considered in setting goals, targets and indicators. These included:

- the desirability of starting with a high-level goal, such as ‘no young person shall leave school without an education, training, employment or social participation pathway’, and then setting a range of specific targets that will indicate progress towards this goal;
- the importance of the process by which targets are set, and the need to include young people, including marginalised young people, in this process, as difficult as that may be;
- the value of also involving service providers in the process of developing targets;
- the need to focus not just on individual indicators, but the relationships between them, because it is these relationships that are most likely to indicate the degree of social exclusion and the complexity of the responses required;
- the need for ‘universal’ indicators at the national level, as well as drilling down to examine how indicators differ when data is disaggregated by other factors such as region and population group;
- the need for specific targets for some population groups—for example, Indigenous young people;
- the importance of combining economic targets with non-economic targets, addressing issues such as health and housing;
- the importance of indicators that focus not just on the individual young person, but pick up on his or her place in the family and community environment (because it is the place of a young person in a family and/or community that will indicate the degree of social inclusion or exclusion);
- the need to measure where and how young people participate—not just whether they participate—for example, it is important to measure the degree of participation of particular population groups in *mainstream* schooling, not just participation in schooling in general;
- recognition of the need for medium to long range targets (at least 8–10 years), because it is unrealistic to expect new programs to have a significant impact within two or three years;
- risks of perverse outcomes if targets are too simplistic and have the result of skewing service delivery towards meeting targets, at the expense of outcomes for individuals (as may currently occur with some Job Network performance indicators); and

- the need for some indicators that focus on the service experience of young people, and the responsiveness of the service system (including responsiveness of both government and non-government services).

Some specific targets or indicators were discussed. These included:

- targets for literacy levels in education (as long as these are not the only targets, and are balanced out by targets for social inclusion and engagement of young people);
- targets for take-up on vocational and further education (including traineeships) by young people, and by specific youth population groups;
- targets for successful transitions at key points, including from school to employment, but also at key earlier points such as from early childhood to school, from primary school to secondary school, and through the early years of secondary school;
- level of participation in mainstream education and training, by population group;
- indicators of safety of young people (for example, incidence of young people as victims of assault); and
- length of housing tenure, as an indicator of stability of accommodation.

4. What broad strategies might be adopted to achieve these targets and what data is needed to measure progress?

While our group recognised that we were not able to identify a comprehensive, or prioritised list of strategies, we identified some strategies that could be part of a suite of measures to reduce social exclusion among young people. These included:

- responses to financial causes of social exclusion—for example:
 - providing an automatic entitlement for young people to participate in school activities such as excursions;
 - improving access to income support for young people who become homeless; and
 - decreasing the age of independence for Centrelink payments.
- positive incentives in the income support system (for example, more flexibility in participation requirements where a young person increases school attendance);
- specific mental health programs for young people (given that many mental health issues first manifest between the ages of 15 and 25, but there are few services for this age group);
- programs that seek to intervene around the point of family breakdown, such as Reconnect;
- strategies to address the cost and availability of public transport for young people who seek to participate in education, training or employment;
- parenting education and services for parents of adolescent children;

- strategies to increase the participation of young people in policy decisions that affect them, including the re-establishment of a national youth peak body; and
- specific supports for care leavers, continuing into the mid-20s.

We also recognised that there needs to be regional flexibility in the design and rollout of programs, so that approaches are tailored to local needs, and so that targets reflect the 'starting point' of each community, and set realistic expectations about progress.

Summary:

In summary, we see the mainstream schooling system as a critical area of engagement and disengagement for young people, and want to set broad goals for the schooling system that focus on more than just literacy retention rates, but measure the effectiveness of schools in maintaining the engagement of young people throughout their schooling experience and in particular at key transition points.

We recognise the importance of goals for economic participation, but want to ensure that we also set targets for broader indicators of health, wellbeing and inclusion.

We want responses to be built around high level, aspirational goals, but want to make sure that indicators are sufficiently 'textured' to identify whether there is any change in the social inclusion/exclusion of particularly disadvantaged groups.

We identified the need to address obvious gaps in the service system, which currently mean either that there are no suitable models of service for young people, or that key groups of young people are deemed ineligible for core services such as education and employment assistance.

We recognise that an adequate income is fundamental to social inclusion, and see reform to youth wages and income support as critical components of a social inclusion agenda for young people.

We see it as critical that young people are involved in the process of setting goals, targets, indicators and strategies.

Workshop on disability

1. The strengths and opportunities of the social inclusion agenda

The biggest opportunity is people with disability being included in the agenda

This work fits with other initiatives including:

- The National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy;
- The National Disability Strategy;
- Reviews of the Job Network, Job Capacity Assessments, the Job Capacity Account, Transport Standards;
- Mainstreaming of disability issues;
- Creation of a robust disability lens that can be applied to government considerations routinely;
- Central coordination of policy, with thinking not limited by departmental service delivery;
- Consideration of issues on a cross-disability basis;
- Focus on disabling elements of the environment, not an individual deficit model;
- Finding solutions for the problem of income poverty;
- Improving fundamental community inclusion;
- Big opportunity to break down the silos - we see people who are ill, homeless and struggling with Centrelink – no-one is talking to each other.
- It is a problem that the issues for disability are being identified by service providers, not people with disability.
- A strength is the opportunity to progress understanding of the social model of disability; we need more than structural change, we also need attitudinal change.
- Primary point in government policy that “people will be heard” is very positive; we need to make sure that it is people with disability, not just service providers.
- People from ethnic backgrounds are not included, for example, there is no provision of interpreters; people from non-English speaking backgrounds are really disadvantaged.
- People with intellectual disability need more supports to be heard; for people with severe disability, don't exclude their families who are their strongest advocates.
- This is an opportunity to overcome the lack of research into disability.
- Women with disability are disadvantaged and this needs to be captured in better data collection.
- People with disability have needs well beyond disability; social inclusion gives a framework to respond to this.

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability provides an excellent framework for human rights.
- Voices and concerns of parents and carers are important but are not the same as people with disability.
- We need strategies to enable people with disability to participate, especially those that are traditionally excluded.
- Social inclusion is an opportunity to look beyond employment to participation in the community, including friendships; we can look at social inclusion as a “friendship and social inclusion model.”.
- People with disability need more than the Disability Discrimination Act and the idea of social inclusion is really exciting.
- Each group has its own needs and these need to be considered, not put under the token label of ‘disability’; needs are individual.
- Early intervention is essential; children with disability need to be empowered.

2. Social exclusion: Who? How? Where? Why?

Who is excluded?

- Those experiencing poverty;
- Those who are not recognised socially – people who are deemed to lack social value;
- The disenfranchised and marginalised – anyone who deviates from the norm;
- Migrants and refugees;
- People with HIV/AIDS; and
- People in prisons

How and why are people excluded?

The exclusion of people with disability is justified in many ways. Marcia Rioux identified the following:

- Best interests (people with intellectual disabilities are sterilized);
- Safety concerns (people are not employed – they might injure themselves);
- Protection (people are not supported to take risks);
- Fixing the person (diversity is abandoned for normalcy);
- Reducing government spending (services are cut or are not made available);
- Preventing disability (mass screening is carried out & eugenic abortions are carried out);
- Cost efficiency (dollars replace need as the bottom line for care and support);

- Something better than nothing (segregated & segregating programs put in place);
- Zero tolerance (discrimination is justified on the basis of behavioural differences);
- Providing support (uniformity is expected and expected);
- Productivity (people are excluded from the labour market);
- Quantifying success (non-quantifiable benefits such as quality of life are not measured).
- People who face communication barriers do not get space and support to speak;
- An overzealous protection of privacy is restricting people's quality of life and keeping people in silos; services use privacy as an issue avoidance strategy;
- We are hindered by the segmented sector; our own practices help to continue discrimination and exclusion, with structures that focus on individual impairment types;
- Privacy laws help to keep exclusion happening; people with disability living together cannot treat each other as friends;
- Children with impaired hearing at school, particularly in poor areas, are not supported to be part of the class, for example, they are not provided with captioning and parents are not given information;
- Deafness is a hidden disability, it is not obvious. We need access to everyday communication and information, for example, notice that a train is delayed;
- Those without stable incomes cannot be included;
- People with mental illness, especially those with undiagnosed or poorly diagnosed conditions are not getting decent treatment by Job Capacity Assessors and Job Network providers. We have a case of a person with mental illness seen by an assessor with no expertise with mental illness and the Job Network provider threatened the person that their income support payment would be cut if they disclosed their condition to potential employers;
- Breaching extends exclusion by homelessness etc;
- There is too much emphasis on postcodes – we will miss the population groups; we need finer detail;
- People with HIV/AIDS do not disclose so will not turn up in statistics – we need to get around this;
- Discrimination is rife despite our anti-discrimination laws;
- Government departments do not consult and make significant decisions without talking to people with disability, for example, in Victoria the decision to change the taxi card scheme was made on the basis of medical advice without input by people with disability;
- Public housing is too concentrated in certain suburbs, creating ghettos;

- Exclusion is caused by the inaccessible built environment, discriminatory community attitudes and too much reliance on special provisions for people with disability; we need to do something about the basic education of all people;
- The education system does not accommodate people with disability, particularly those with communication difficulties: limited access to adaptive equipment and training and few trained aids in schools;
- The attitude of schools is aggressive towards people with disability;
- Children of people with disability can experience flow on effects from their parents' social exclusion;
- Sheltered workshops are a form of social exclusion – 18,000 people are in segregated workplaces and this needs to be revisited;
- There is too much 'context free' policy made by people who have never met a person with disability or visited a community organisation.

3. What are the goals, benchmarks and targets for the Commonwealth Government to implement?

- The UN Convention is extensive, covering all areas of life. We can have goals, benchmarks and targets in each. It covers the right to life, to live free from violence, to live independently as an adult, to communicate using your preferred language, and the right to form a family. The Convention also covers education, employment, income support, housing, taking part in the political process and having access to cultural and leisure activities;
- There is too much focus on employment, it risks hijacking social inclusion; we need to focus on life – arts, music, sexuality;
- Women from ethnic backgrounds often have poor education and are unemployed; I'm sick of the Government saying that people with disability should get a job. Where's the support?
- A lot of good work has already been done, including the European Social Charter which was adopted in 1961 and has 31 domains – we should look to these examples of what has been successful in other countries;
- There are many quality of life/well being measures available, such as life expectancy;
- Measure the cultural suitability of services, for example the extent of interpreter use;
- Targets for quality of life for people living in community residential settings – increased control over decision making;
- Increased rights for tenants in group homes;
- Evaluations should include a gender lens;
- Equitable distribution of assistance;
- Increased supports for people to live their lives;

- Increased investment in education;
- Specific measures proposed are:
 - Doubling the employment rate of people with disability by 2014;
 - Reducing the percentage of people with disability experiencing difficulties using transport;
 - Increased job retention;
 - Improved job satisfaction;
 - Increased number of social contacts for people with disability with complex needs (outside of family and carers);
 - Decline in the representation of people with disability in the criminal justice system, especially people with mental illness and intellectual disability;
 - Decline in the number of people living in institutions;
 - Increased choice in accommodation;
 - Improved access to transport and improved ease of access;
 - Improved access to buildings and streets and improved ease of access;
 - Improved access to communication, for example, the proportion of DVDs and TV shows that are captioned;
 - Effective transition targets for example, number of people moving from group homes to real homes;
 - Improved access to voting;
 - Adoption of universal design principles in private and social housing;
 - Improved access to aids and equipment;
 - Improved community attitudes to people with disability;
 - Increased number of people from non-English speaking backgrounds accessing Commonwealth/State-Territory Disability Agreement funded services;
 - Extent of the shift of funding from service providers direct to people with disability;
 - Close the gap in educational attainment between students with disability and their peers;
 - Increased number of people with communication barriers able to initiate contacts with services;
 - Improved access to anti-violence support services;
 - Increased rates of return to work following injury.

4. What broad strategies might be adopted to achieve these targets and what data is needed to measure progress?

- Need to change the mentality that leads to current policies;
- Do not allow the agenda to be colonised by vested interests, for example, in South Australia the priorities are all about bed numbers – social inclusion must not be colonised by health and welfare;
- Not everyone will be picked up by postcodes, we need targets for transport, access to buildings and streets, and access to communication, for example, captioning of DVDs and TV shows; when these barriers are removed participation will increase;
- Homelessness is the end point of social exclusion;
- Goals should be aspirational and radical - the targets can be more modest;
- Need to pay fair prices for services, for example, it costs \$5,000 to get someone established in a house, but there is no money available;
- We need an agenda of unmet need but needs to be broadened beyond need for services;
- Exclusionary processes need to be removed – assessments that are just hoops for people with disability to jump through;
- Funding should be flexible;
- Need a strong focus on the well being of people with disability who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander;
- Social inclusion must capture issues of exclusion that are particular to people with disability, like sterilisation and sexuality – exclusion related to the ways that people with disability can express themselves;
- Early intervention for deaf and hearing impaired children is vital;
- Parents with a disability need support; with it, they can do as good a job as anyone else. An increasing number of people with disability are having children;
- Women with disability need to be on the agenda;
- How can we make sure generic agencies can offer services? Services need training in understanding people with complex needs;
- Need to acknowledge the role that forms of accommodation can play in exclusion, from institutions to boarding homes to group homes – focus should be on choice, opportunities for social interaction, and safety and security;
- The new United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability is a good way to think about what we need to do to end the social exclusion of people with disability. There are Principles which underlie the Convention (Article 3).

These principles say that people with disability have the right to:

- Dignity ;
- Fairness without discrimination;
- Be included and accepted;

- Equal opportunity, irrespective of gender;
- An accessible community; and
- Respect
- Whatever strategies we adopt, they have to be based on these principles;
- The Convention then lists areas in which people with disability have rights. They include: the right to life, to live free from violence, to live independently as an adult, to communicate using your preferred language, and the right to form a family. The Convention also covers education, employment, income support, housing, taking part in the political process and having access to cultural and leisure activities;
- We need strategies in each of these areas to create social inclusion;
- The Victorian Charter of Human Rights is a good model;
- Strategies must be based on universal design. It is important that we do not go down the path of creating a parallel world for people with disability;
- Government should be the champion and defender of people who are socially excluded;
- Departments need to work outside existing service paradigms;
- Need early and consistent early intervention across Australia, such as hearing screening of newborns;
- The Victims of Crime and Victims of Abuse of Power international agreements should be referenced;
- We need targets for addressing what people have lost to crime – redress and restoration;
- New Zealand has a strategy for reducing stigma in the community and increasing levels of community understanding;
- Measures must reflect/capture the change that you are trying to achieve;
- We need to move to providing support such as aids and equipment as an entitlement;
- Improve coordination of services between the Commonwealth, States/Territories and Local governments – municipal borders shouldn't count;
- Service providers and disability advocates need to be educated in the empowerment of people with disability to move away from the concept of providing 'special services';
- You will get more bang for buck from effective advocacy (for example Disability Discrimination Act complaints) than a community education campaign;
- Need to use a diverse range of approaches to provide services and support to people with disability, big/small, specialised/generic;
- The Government needs to be proactive to include people with communication needs;
- Data should be centralised;

- Use a 'whole-of-life' measure of success of social inclusion;
- It is not possible to have social inclusion with entitlement; people shouldn't have to beg for scraps;
- A central focus must be choice for people with disability in terms of employment participation for example, open employment or business services;
- We must frame debates so that access is not seen as a disability cost;
- The disability services system is poor at empowering people with disability and involving people with disability in discussions. The sector must lead by example.

Specific strategies proposed were:

- People working on disability policy be trained in disability awareness by people with disability and be given history lessons by people with disability who are best able to say what works and why;
- Return to the disability funding model that was used prior to the Keating era;
- Introduce individualised packages/payments;
- Devote more resources to support people who are socially isolated to be heard;
- Reform the Welfare to Work system;
- More on the job training directed at improving workplace cultures and creating inclusive workplaces;
- Employ people with disability as auditors to identify barriers in the community;
- Provide support for people with disability to speak to/connect with their neighbours;
- Put in place a transparent reporting process, similar to the pricing tribunals, in which government departments are required to report against benchmarks and respond to independent reviews of their performance against the benchmarks;
- Co-locate employment services with mental illness services;
- Empower people with disability with information about their rights and how to speak up;
- Reports produced on the progress of social inclusion strategy need to be widely available and in accessible formats;
- Build on what we know works, for example the Victorian Strategy for Domestic Violence includes women with disability;
- Implement a community education and awareness campaign;
- Do audits of building/public space accessibility;
- Review the success of audit checklists in creating cultural change in workplaces;
- Sector should improve cooperation with universities and research bodies to improve our evidence base, especially to allow small organisations access to support;

- Strengthen disability advocacy – by people with disability for people with disability – with improved national networks;
- Improve research through the development and funding of an inclusive research agenda focussed on issues identified by people with disability;
- Need research with disaggregated data to demonstrate the success in closing the gap; disability included in generic data collections;
- Create a Vulnerable Person's Jurisdiction, as recommended in a Queensland Advocacy Incorporated report and implement the report's other recommendations related to auditing, law reform, educating the policy and educating people with disability;
- Improve legislative protections, for example in the United States it is illegal for a hospital to discharge a person who does not have a home to go to;
- Advocacy groups should use established international mechanisms and feed information about rights infringements to the international level;
- Introduce a 2% levy, similar to the Medicare levy, to fund whole of life support for people with disability.

Workshop on climate change, essential services and equity

1. The strengths and opportunities of the social inclusion agenda

Workshop participants engaged in a discussion of the strengths and opportunities of the social inclusion agenda, identifying the following opportunities:

- with a view to the fundamentals of social inclusion (secure a job, access services, connect with others, deal with crises...) there was acknowledgement that energy (and particularly electricity) is an essential service that should be supplied equitably, affordably, reliably and sustainably;
- ensuring that disadvantaged consumers are guaranteed continuity of reliable energy supply;
- ensuring that national energy markets are developed in ways that ensure adequate protection for consumers, particularly low income consumers;
- ensuring that jurisdiction-specific regimes for community service obligations and hardship programs are appropriate, accessible, well resourced.

Opportunities exist in the direct and indirect links between social inclusion and climate change through:

- direct impacts of climate change;
- policy and program responses;
- opportunities that may develop to engage individuals and communities in work towards mitigation and adaptation including through new forms of employment; and
- potential to add to the social inclusion agenda “enjoyment of a healthy environment with public amenity”.

2. Social exclusion: Who, How, Where, Why?

Who is excluded?

- Delegates discussed the exclusion of consumers from access to an essential service and noted that there is some potential for most people to be excluded at some stage (utility hardship) but that low income consumers, disadvantaged and vulnerable consumers are at higher risk of exclusion.
- Delegates discussed the potential for climate change and climate change responses to effect or exacerbate social exclusion. Low income and disadvantaged individuals, households and communities are at greater risk of experiencing adverse impacts of climate change, have less capacity to adapt, may have less capacity to benefit from policies and programs directed to facilitate mitigation and adaptation, may find some

policies and programs are , in effect, regressive (for example an emissions trading scheme).

How are people excluded?

- People can be excluded from access to essential energy services (an inability to establish or maintain connection) as a result of factors including poverty and hardship, illiteracy, an inability to access services and programs that facilitate continuity of connection (for example financial counsellors).
- People can be socially excluded as a result of ‘fuel poverty’ or the constraint of consumption (of energy or fuel) because of the cost of the service or product. Low income households may under-consume or experience periods ‘off supply’ as a result of incapacity to pay. Where time-of-use pricing for electricity is introduced, some households may be disadvantaged as a result of their inability to shift consumption to periods where tariffs are low.
- People can be socially excluded as the result of a lack of appropriate information that might positively affect behaviour and ameliorate fuel poverty, for example in the case of home energy audits and reduced or shifted energy consumption.
- People can be socially excluded as a result of climate change through exposure to impacts of climate change (drought, flood, extremes of temperature etc) and as a result of policies and programs designed as responses to climate change that fail to address the needs of low income and disadvantaged households or go to facilitate social exclusion through collateral effects (for example price increases for good and services resulting from an emissions trading scheme).

Climate change links

Direct	Indirect
Health	Policy, regulatory settings
Crisis	Access to services, alternatives
Dislocation	
Employment, livelihood	
Life expectancy	
	Prices energy, water
	travel
	food
	insurance

Where are people excluded?

- There are geographical dimensions affecting access to essential energy services: for example some rural and remote areas experience unreliable supply, reticulated gas is not available to many households (as an alternative to electricity that may be less expensive).
- There are geographical dimensions to the impacts of climate change. Some regions will experience more extreme adverse effects, for example low lying areas may be more prone to flood, south-central areas of the continent may be more prone to drought.

Social inclusion domains (potential indicators of climate change domains)

1. Poverty
2. Early childhood
3. Indigenous peoples
4. CALD people
5. People with disabilities
6. Youth and education
7. Employment
8. Housing
9. Health

Why are people excluded?

- People are excluded as a result of poverty, geography, low levels of literacy, inability to access support services, inadequate access to appropriate information.

3. What are the goals, benchmarks and targets for the Commonwealth Government to implement?

- The National Electricity Market (NEM) Objective is currently expressed and interpreted in narrow economic terms as below and should be recast to incorporate social (inclusion) and environmental dimensions:

“The national electricity market objective is to promote efficient investment in, and efficient operation and use of, electricity services for the long term interests of consumers of electricity with respect to price, quality, reliability and security of supply of electricity and the reliability, safety and security of the national electricity system.”.
- Delegates agreed that clear equity principles should be established for consideration of social inclusion in policy debate about climate change, for example, “no low income household should be worse off as a result of climate change or responses to climate change”.

As a community we need to address equity as the central issue in debate about the disposition of revenue from an emissions trading scheme and to ensure that low

income households benefit from the potential to invest in mitigation and adaptation and to ensure that safety net arrangements are in place to ensure that a carbon price does not further disadvantage low income households. It was noted that efforts towards mitigation and adaptation should commence immediately and not be dependent on revenue from emissions trading.

- Need to address these questions:
 - where and to whom should emissions trading revenue be allocated?
 - how should protection of vulnerable groups fit in?
 - how do we agree targets and measures?
 - how do we enforce compliance with appropriate permit allocation, and prevent inappropriate permit allocation?
- Work towards mitigation and adaptation should intensify immediately, prioritise low income and disadvantaged households, and include:
 1. identify housing stock occupied by low income households and begin a process of home energy and water audits;
 2. identify and prioritise stock that would benefit from solar hot water systems;
 3. identify and prioritise stock that would benefit from water tanks;
 4. identify and prioritise stock that would benefit from [re]insulation;
 5. identify and prioritise stock and/or households that would benefit from appliance upgrades;
 6. ensure energy tariffs are fair and facilitate continuity of access to essential services;
 7. implement measures that facilitate improvement of energy and water efficiency in rental properties;
 8. develop approaches to safety net measures (i.e. compensation) that ensure low income households are not further disadvantaged by a carbon price;
 9. develop approaches to and make resources available for regional adjustment;
 10. develop and implement consistent national building codes with appropriate standards for new and retrofit construction.

4. What broad strategies might be adopted to achieve these targets and what data is needed to measure progress?

- In designing regulatory frameworks for the national electricity and gas markets the Commonwealth should ensure high levels of consumer protection that are directed towards continuity of supply of an essential service and harmonisation of appropriate community service obligations.
- To the extent possible, the Commonwealth should encourage jurisdictional regulators and market participants to price essential energy and water services in such a way as to ensure affordable consumption to a reasonable minimum quantum, a life line cap, as a means of ensuring equitable access to service.

Social inclusion may be maintained or enhanced through climate change and responses to climate change by facilitating:

- Change management, assisting the transition
- Access to new products, technologies
- Flexibility to adopt new systems

- Financial literacy to make informed decisions
- Intellectual, physical ability to cope with change
- Geographic and spatial, structural, social and economic capacity to adapt behaviour

Social inclusion targets, indicators, policies and programs might refer to factors such as

- Improved access to energy and water efficiency measures
- Just employment transition
- Reduced poverty
- Increased distribution of technology
- Improved governance, political participation
- Improved knowledge and awareness
- Access and adequacy of services

Data: as indicated above there is a critical lack of data about the quality of housing stock and the scope of programs required to improve efficiency.