



You, Me, Everybody

Understanding social inclusion in the
ACT and Australia

June 2012

About ACTCOSS

ACTCOSS acknowledges that Canberra has been built on the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to their elders and recognise the displacement and disadvantage they have suffered as a result of European settlement. We celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and ongoing contribution to the ACT community.

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) is the peak representative body for not-for-profit community organisations, people living with disadvantage and low-income citizens of the Territory.

ACTCOSS is a member of the nationwide COSS network, made up of each of the state and territory Councils and the national body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

ACTCOSS' vision is to live in a fair and equitable community that respects and values diversity and actively encourages collaborations that promote justice, equity and social inclusion.

The membership of the Council includes the majority of community based service providers in the social welfare area, a range of community associations and networks, self-help and consumer groups and interested individuals.

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Table of contents

Defining Inclusion and Exclusion	6
Social Inclusion	7
Social Exclusion	7
Definitional problems	8
Usefulness	9
Words Into Action	10
The ACT.....	11
Developing a Social Inclusion Agenda.....	13
First step	13
Next steps	13
Groups experiencing disadvantage - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.....	13
Intergenerational disadvantage.....	15
Benchmarks, targets and deadlines.....	15
Outcomes-based reporting	16
Consultation	17
Roles – government, individuals, community sector	17
Government.....	18
Individuals	18
Community Sector	18
Testing and evaluating.....	19
Conclusion.....	20
Reference list.....	21

Acronyms

ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Service Inc.
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACTCOSS	ACT Council of Social Service Inc.
NGOs	Non Government Organisations
UK	United Kingdom

The concept of social inclusion and exclusion is important for a number of reasons. It broadens our understanding of disadvantage in the community beyond the single dimension of poverty to cover other factors – including process or systemic issues which impact on disadvantage, the denial of rights, and the lack of opportunity for participation in the various areas of modern life. It also focuses beyond what exclusion is, to its consequences and impacts for individuals and society, in both the short and long term.

You, Me, Everybody – Understanding Social Inclusion in the ACT and Australia seeks to provide a broader understanding of the concepts of social inclusion and social exclusion, and to demonstrate the usefulness of such terms. It examines outcomes of utilising the terms in public discourse, including taking a closer look at the establishment of the Australian Social Inclusion Board and a Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in 2008, and what work has been done in the ACT. This publication also seeks to explore what steps are necessary in the creation of any social inclusion agenda.

Defining Inclusion and Exclusion

The terms social inclusion and social exclusion first properly began to enter public discourse in France in the 1970s.¹ A modern way of describing people who were excluded from that country's social insurance system, the term social exclusion was extended to cover disengaged people, a large number of them youth, with an emphasis on people experiencing unemployment following an increase in social unrest. The terms spread to the rest of Europe in the 1980s and 90s, becoming a particular concern of the UK Blair Government in 1997.² The terms social inclusion and social exclusion have come into the Australian public discourse relatively recently.³

It is not easy to prescribe a definition to the terms 'social inclusion' and 'social exclusion' as there are no universally agreed explanations. Both concepts are multi-dimensional and complex, and the terms are sometimes interchangeable. There is a school of thought which says social exclusion is the natural face of social inclusion, while others believe the two concepts are polar opposites. What is agreed upon is it is virtually impossible to discuss one concept without discussing the other.⁴

The term social exclusion is usually the focus of much research and comment, more so than the concept of social inclusion. This is perhaps because it is easier to identify the elements people do not have, which result in them experiencing social exclusion, than to explore an abstract concept such as social inclusion which is broad and far-reaching. However, there is undeniably a need to examine both concepts when discussing how social inclusion might be strengthened and supported any community.

At the outset it is important to recognise the assumptions which lie behind social inclusion and social exclusion which can limit and constrain the positions individuals and groups can take up:

It means different things to different people at different times, even within a particular national and ideological context.⁵

In this way, social inclusion and exclusion are not absolute concepts, but relative to the norms and expectations of society at a particular point in time.⁶

1 A Hayes and M Gray, 'Social inclusion: A policy platform for those who live particularly challenged lives', *Family Matters*, Issue No. 78, 200, pp.4-7.

2 Ibid.

3 P Saunders, *The Poverty Wars*, University of New South Wales, NSW, 2005.

4 K Kurzak, 'Social Inclusion – an information sheet from The Australian Collaboration', *Poverty and Social Exclusion, Issues in Society*, Volume 320, The Spinney Press, NSW, 2011.

5 L Buckmaster and M Thomas, 'Social inclusion and social citizenship – towards a truly inclusive society', Research Paper, no. 8, 2009-10, ISSN 1834-9854, Parliament of Australia, 2009, p.9

6 A Taket, B.R Crisp, A Nevill, G Lamaro, M Graham, and S Barter-Godfrey (eds.) *Theorising Social Exclusion*, Routledge, New York, 2009.

Social Inclusion

As a concept, social inclusion can be hard to define. It involves making assumptions about the type of society it is desirable to have and the types of lives people should be leading. Social inclusion is often a broad term, focusing on early intervention and prevention. The current discourse in Australia is based on a broad societal focus rather than on distinct groups and individuals. As such, it can be susceptible to charges of being a blunt instrument for measuring other concepts such as social cohesion.

In 2002 the South Australian Government set up a Social Inclusion Board, under which social inclusion was defined as

providing people with the fundamentals of a decent life: opportunities to engage in the economic and social life of the community with dignity; increasing their capabilities and functioning; connecting people to the networks of local community; supporting health, housing, education, skills training, employment and caring responsibilities.⁷

The Australian Social Inclusion Board, created in 2008, supported the South Australian's definition of social inclusion, noting that to be socially included people must be given the opportunity to secure employment, access services, enjoy social capital, deal with personal crises, and have their voices heard.⁸

At its very core, social inclusion is about making sure people are connected socially and in their broader community by seeking to overcome the barriers which cause people to feel excluded, and thus giving them the opportunity to have a rich and full life.

Social Exclusion

In comparison, the term social exclusion is a narrower concept, often focusing on a select group of people rather than the whole of society. Again, there is not one universally agreed definition, but a collection of interpretations which are values-based and subjective.

A succinct summary of social exclusion may read

It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in society, whether in economic, social, cultural, or political arenas.⁹

It is important to note social exclusion is not related solely to fiscal poverty. Although there is a lengthy history between the ideas of social exclusion,

7 D Cappel, *People and Community at the Heart of Systems and Bureaucracy: South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative*, South Australian Government, South Australia, 2009.

8 Australian Social Inclusion Board, Australian Government, *Breaking Cycles of Disadvantage*, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, 2008.

9 R Levitas, C Pantazis, F Eldin, D Gordon, E Llyod, and D Patsios, *The Multi-dimensional analysis of social exclusion*, Department of Sociology and School for Social Policy, 2007.

poverty and deprivation, the characteristics of social exclusion relate to people being unable to do what they seek to do - which is not solely related to poverty. While income and resources have a significant influence on people's lives, poverty in life leading to social exclusion should be viewed in terms of 'poor living', rather than lack of or low income.¹⁰

Generally speaking, social exclusion usually has a number of factors and can cross different 'realms'.¹¹ One such realm is economic; where a person's access to income, employment, the labour market, and access to services including housing, health and education can have an impact on their inclusion in society. There is also the social dimension, including a person's opportunity for social participation and participation in decision-making. Another area relates to a person's political life, namely their rights and citizenship. Finally, social exclusion can be influenced by the spatial factors in a person's life, including geography, locality and transport.¹²

The concept of social exclusion can be further defined by three forms of exclusion a person can experience:

- wide exclusion, where a large number of people are excluded on a single or small number of indicators;
- deep exclusion, which refers to people being excluded on multiple or overlapping dimensions; and
- concentrated exclusion, which relates to a geographic concentration of exclusion.¹³

Definitional problems

The terms social inclusion and social exclusion carry definitional problems, having, as mentioned previously, no universally accepted explanation. This lack of definitional clarity can lead to the concepts being used for too many things for too many people, sometimes unfavourably.¹⁴ A conservative view of this problem has been taken by authors such as Peter Saunders (from the Centre for Independent Studies) who opines far too many people can be regarded as excluded which results in the responsibility for a given problem being shifted from personal responsibility to societal responsibility.¹⁵ In contrast, it has been argued the vague nature of social exclusion can 'let politicians off the hook'

10 A Sen, 'Social Exclusion: Concept, Application, and Scrutiny', Social Development Papers No. 1, Office of Environment and Social Development, Asian Development Bank, Manila Philippines, 2000.

11 A Taket, B.R Crisp, A Nevill, G Lamaro, M Graham, and S Barter-Godfrey (eds.), op. cit.

12 Ibid.

13 A Hayes and M Gray, op. cit.

14 L Buckmaster and M Thomas, op. cit.

15 Saunders P. & Tsumori, K. (2002), Poverty in Australia: Beyond the Rhetoric, Policy Monograph No. 57, Centre for Independent Studies, Sydney.

because it tends to obscure the role of government.¹⁶ The fact the concept of social exclusion is so broad, and can contain multiple factors more diverse than a straight poverty analysis, means it can be difficult to measure, and thus, difficult to form policies from.

In addition the concepts, particularly that of social exclusion, can in themselves be exclusionary. It has been argued that labelling people as socially excluded is based on an idea of mainstream society and what 'normal' is, and it is really only the dominant values and way of life of a society which have yet to be challenged.¹⁷ Social exclusion can also take on a moralistic tone where mainstream society's values are held up as something which everyone must aim for, regardless of individual aspirations.¹⁸ No matter how social exclusion is defined or conceptualised, it is often related to the concept of non-conformity to mainstream society by a group or individual. As such, policy frameworks which involve social exclusion can impose negative social policy and actually undermine the attempts of 'the excluded' to regain some empowerment.¹⁹

Usefulness

Conversely, the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion can sometimes prove very useful in the consideration and development of public policies.

Understanding and utilising the term social inclusion can help build a strong policy framework that focuses on early intervention and prevention. A social inclusion approach has important implications for the way government policy is implemented. It forces the government to see the importance of 'joined-up' services and the value such services bring in addressing multiple areas of disadvantage.²⁰ In addition some of the core elements of social inclusion can be useful in the debate about the well-being of individuals in Australia, including the need to combat exclusion through a coordinated approach.²¹

As discussed before, the term social exclusion broadens the understanding of the disadvantages individuals and groups face. It departs from focusing solely on economic hardship to an emphasis on the multidimensional nature of social exclusion which in turn leads to a broader significance policy-wise, and encourages government to focus on programs and services which, traditionally, were not seen as significant in relation to an individual's social inclusion.²²

16 B.H. Hunter, 'Social exclusion, social capital, and Indigenous Australians: Measuring the social costs of unemployment', Discussion Paper, No.204/2000, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, 2000.

17 L Buckmaster and M Thomas, op. cit.

18 Ibid.

19 A Taket, B.R Crisp, A Nevill, G Lamaro, M Graham, and S Barter-Godfrey (eds.), op. cit.

20 K Kurzak, 'Social Inclusion – an information sheet from The Australian Collaboration', *Poverty and Social Exclusion, Issues in Society*, Volume 320, The Spinney Press, NSW, 2011.

21 P Saunders, *The Poverty Wars*, University of New South Wales, NSW, 2005.

22 P Smyth, *In or Out? Building an Inclusive Nation*, The Australian Collaboration and The Brotherhood of St Laurence, Victoria, 2010.

Words Into Action

In practice, the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion have proved valuable. Internationally, in the UK the social inclusion/exclusion discourse has led to government programs that cut across multiple areas of disadvantage such as homelessness, unemployment and school truancy. By using social exclusion as a framework for government policies and programs, areas of disadvantage which traditionally may not have been targeted are seeing significant changes occur.²³

In Australia, dialogue around social inclusion and exclusion led to the Federal Government establishing the Social Inclusion Unit ('the Unit') in December 2007. Sitting within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Unit is responsible for coordinating a whole-of-government approach to social inclusion through undertaking research and analysis, and

works to develop a shared understanding of, and coordinate efforts to embed, social inclusion approaches across agencies and jurisdictions. This includes providing advice to the Minister for Social Inclusion and undertaking research and analysis.²⁴

Complementing the Social Inclusion Unit, the Australian Social Inclusion Board ('the Board') was established in May 2008. The role of the Board is to provide advice to the Government on policies and programs which support and enhance social inclusion. The Board draws upon the knowledge and experience of the different groups and sectors it engages with, including the community sector, and aims to connect better policy with the knowledge and experience of these sectors.

Publications the Board have developed include a report investigating how best to measure disadvantage and social exclusion in Australia; a publication which sets out the principles which contribute to strong, inclusive and resilient communities by building resources and capacity; and a report into breaking cycles of disadvantage.

In 2010 ACTCOSS made a submission to the Board's research into breaking the cycle of disadvantage.²⁵ The submission illustrated disadvantage and its cycles in the ACT, and identified measures to assist certain at-risk groups from breaking out of the cycle of disadvantage. The submission also discussed the roles both government and community sector can play in empowering people to leave the cycle of disadvantage, and illustrated the efforts and success of community organisations in aiding people break out of the cycle of disadvantage.

23 Australian Council of Social Service, *Taking steps for a fair go for all: Social Inclusion Policies and Processes*, Sydney, 2008.

24 Australian Government Social Inclusion Unit website, viewed 10 April 2012, <<http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/government/social-inclusion-unit>>.

25 ACTCOSS, Submission to the Australian Government Social Inclusion Board: *Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage in the ACT*, 2010

The Board's priorities for 2012-13 include a focus on the emerging issue of older women and homelessness; improving employment outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers; and consolidating the body of knowledge around improving fiscal capabilities of people experiencing disadvantage.²⁶

The Board, the Unit and the Federal Minister for Inclusion, the Hon. Mark Butler MP, remain an integral part of the Commonwealth Government's Social Inclusion Agenda.

However it is concerning to note some jurisdictional social inclusion initiatives have been disbanded, such as the absorption of the South Australian Social Inclusion Initiative ('the Initiative') into the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion. This change is particularly worrying as Australia was late to the table in terms of embracing social inclusion as a policy approach, and the South Australian initiative was the first of its kind in the country.

Evidence-based and utilising a collaborative mobilisation of government and non-government agencies, the Initiative recognised the traditional approaches to service delivery did not work for people experiencing social exclusion, and the complexity of such disadvantage required a person-centred approach.²⁷ It resulted in systemic changes to areas such as youth disengagement from education, mental health services, and access to facilities and services, due to the focused approach on creating a socially inclusive community.²⁸ By all accounts a successful innovation for the community and a trailblazer for other jurisdictions, it is of great concern the South Australian Social Inclusion Initiative has been buried within another department.

The ACT

The ACT, along with other jurisdictions such as Victoria and South Australia, sits in quite a strong position when it comes to including social inclusion in its policies and strategies, due to an overarching social inclusion agenda. In the ACT, this agenda is in the form of *Building our Community: The Canberra Social Plan* ('the Canberra Social Plan'), a social, economic and planning framework for Canberra.²⁹ Within the Canberra Social Plan are priorities and goals relating to the strengthening of the ACT community, including the support of people experiencing disadvantage.

26 Australian Government Social Inclusion Agenda website, viewed 9 July 2012, <<http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/australian-social-inclusion-board/priorities>>.

27 A Hayes, M Gray and B Edwards, *Social Inclusion: Origins, concepts and key themes*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, paper prepared for the Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2008, viewed 11 July 2012, <<http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/sites/www.socialinclusion.gov.au/files/publications/pdf/PMC%20AIFS%20report.pdf>>.

28 D Cappel, *South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative: Results Driven Social Innovation*, University of South Australia, South Australia, 2009, viewed 9 July 2012, <<http://w3.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/publications/social-innovation/cappel.pdf>>.

29 Chief Minister's Department, *Building our Community: The Canberra Social Plan*, Australian Capital Territory, 2004.

Guiding the implementation of the goals of the 2004 Canberra Social Plan was the Community Inclusion Board ('the Board'), which was comprised of community leaders from NGOs, the business sector, the broader community and senior government representatives. The Board's role was to advise the government on how community inclusion works in Canberra, and to identify areas which contribute to social exclusion and emerging areas of concern.³⁰

Since the Board presented its final report in 2009, the ACT Government has undertaken a review and update of the Canberra Social Plan, releasing the *Canberra Social Plan 2011*. This plan builds on the previous ones, and includes the vision that

Canberra is a place where all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of an inclusive community.³¹

While the commitment to a community inclusion policy agenda by the ACT Government is warmly welcomed, ACTCOSS was concerned by the early closure of the Community Inclusion Board, and believes there is still a need for a forum to continue to provide advice to the ACT Government on social inclusion, on an on-going basis. Social exclusion is not a static state, and there are groups who may be experiencing exclusion now who were not when the Board first examined emerging areas of concern. As such ACTCOSS recommends the ACT Government seriously consider investing in an overarching body to guide the implementation of the Social Plan, across government and the community.

While the ACT Government has a strong focus on community engagement, particularity through tools such as its *Time to Talk* website, there remains a need to guarantee every person has an opportunity to have their voices heard through a variety of mediums. In addition, it is important these tools are used in a meaningful and effective manner to further social inclusion principles. As outlined in the ACT *Human Rights Act*

Every citizen has the right, and is to have the opportunity to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through fairly chosen representatives.³²

And Civic expression and participation are clearly articulated in the Human Rights Act. Section 16 (2) of the Act states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of borders, whether orally, in writing or in print, by way of art or in another way chosen by him or her.³³

30 Social Policy and Implementation Branch, *Sharing the Benefits of our Community: Building community inclusion in Canberra*, The End of Term Report of the ACT Community Inclusion Board 2008-2009, Australian Capital Territory, 2009.

31 ACT Government, the *Canberra Social Plan 2011*, Australian Capital Territory, 2011, p.5.

³² *Human Rights Act 2004*, ACT, Section 17

³³ *Human Rights Act 2004*, ACT, Section 16 (2)

Developing a Social Inclusion Agenda

First step

If we accept the concepts of social inclusion and social exclusion as being useful in informing public policy, it becomes desirable to first examine what values and goals are given weight in the consideration of a social inclusion agenda.

In the development of any form of a social inclusion agenda, several assumptions first need to be made about the kind of society we would like all citizens to be included in.³⁴ What values are important? What ways of life are desirable? Is it vital for everyone to have full employment, or are there other areas of life which are just as important for the social inclusion of all citizens? These questions, and others, need to be given proper consideration as the first step in reflecting on the sort of society a social inclusion agenda is striving for.

Next steps

Having established a baseline notion of a social inclusion agenda, the following steps would be required in order to develop and implement the agenda. First, there needs to be reference to how social inclusion strategies have been developed and implemented in other jurisdictions. This research would feed into the social inclusion agenda, keeping in mind each jurisdiction's own unique situation and circumstances.

Following on from this, there needs to be a preliminary understanding of the scope, impact, and trends of social exclusion in the community, with robust data to begin to create a profile of the groups most at risk of exclusion.

Groups experiencing disadvantage - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples

Understanding the link between social inclusion and social exclusion, in the development of any social inclusion agenda it is imperative there is a focus on those who are already most disadvantaged, and thus, most at risk of experiencing social exclusion. One group who experiences disadvantage across a whole range of factors, including but not limited to, employment, housing, education, health care, incarceration, and alcohol and/or other drug misuse are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is not to say that other groups should not be considered in the development of a social inclusion agenda. For a truly inclusive society, there is a need to consider groups who historically, and still today, experience disadvantage and exclusion, including

34 P Smyth, op. cit.

but not limited to women; the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex community; sole parents; and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.³⁵ However it cannot be denied that as a group, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience consistent and systemic disadvantage which has left many of them in a state of social exclusion.³⁶

The results of this disadvantage can be felt in almost every area, from health to education, through to employment and access to services. As just one example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are over-represented in the justice system, with data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare showing on an average day in 2008-09, 37% of males and 44% of females under juvenile justice supervision were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young peoples, even though as a whole they only make up around 5% of the youth population of Australia.³⁷ More worryingly, the level of over-representation was higher for detention than community-based supervision, where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young peoples were 24 times as likely to be detained as other young people.³⁸ In the health area life expectancies for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander males and females were 11.5 and 9.7 years lower respectively than for the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.³⁹

The impacts these multiple disadvantages have on the social inclusion (or, more pointedly, the social exclusion) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities cannot be disputed. Whilst it should be acknowledged that in recent years there has been a shift in government policies to reflect a commitment to righting these wrongs, as a group, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples still lack the resources, rights and freedom to participate in many of the economic, cultural, social or political activities the majority of other people in society do. It can be argued Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly young people, have been shaped into an 'outsider' group, which can lead to enforced stereotypes and profiling by mainstream society, thus reinforcing the cycle of social exclusion.⁴⁰ A social inclusion agenda should therefore seek to address this disadvantage as a priority.

35 D Weiss (ed.) *Social Exclusion: An Approach to the Australia Case*, Peter Lang GmbH, Frankfurt, 2003.

36 ACT Council of Social Service, *Whose Rights? Strengthening Human Rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the ACT*, Canberra, 2012.

37 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *The health of Australia's prisoners 2009*, Cat. no. PHE123, Australia, 2010.

38 Ibid.

39 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Health and Welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 2010, viewed 3 March 2012, <<http://abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/lookup/4704.0Main+Features1Oct+2010>>.

40 Q Beresford and P Omaji, *Rites of Passage: Aboriginal Youth, Crime and Justice*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, South Fremantle, Western Australia, 1996.

Intergenerational disadvantage

One of the most important aspects of any social inclusion agenda is that it aims to address intergenerational disadvantage. The term intergenerational disadvantage refers to the disadvantage experienced by a person which is, at least in part, heavily influenced by the circumstances of their family, usually parents or key guardians.⁴¹

Intergenerational disadvantage usually pertains to experiences of poverty, although evidence shows it is not solely confined to this issue. International disadvantage can extend to involvement in the criminal justice system. Although there has been little Australian research conducted on this issue, the link between parental incarceration and young people who are engaged with the youth justice system is beginning to be understood.⁴² Research indicates young people who have a parent incarcerated are up to six times more likely to become involved in the youth justice system, compared to other young people.⁴³ Intergenerational disadvantage can also involve the passing down from parent to child of a lack of education options, mental ill-health, and alcohol and/or other drug misuse.

More tellingly, intergenerational disadvantage can also be underpinned by relationship problems and breakdown within the family.⁴⁴ Emerging studies in the field of the impact of domestic violence on children note the strong link between inter-family violence, and the probability of that violent cycle continuing into the next generation. Put bluntly

The single best predictor of children becoming either perpetrators or victims of domestic violence later in life is whether or not they grow up in a home where there is domestic violence.⁴⁵

Including intergenerational disadvantage in a social inclusion agenda means first acknowledging the impact this type of disadvantage plays on families and communities, and making a real commitment to ending this cycle of disadvantage.

Benchmarks, targets and deadlines

Having established a baseline set of values with which to base a socially inclusive society on, and identifying areas to focus on, the next step in

41 T Vinson, *Social Inclusion: Intergenerational Disadvantage*, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2008.

42 J Travis, 'Prisoners' Families and Children', *Family In Transition*, 14th ed., (Eds.) A Skolnik and J Skolnik, Pearson Education Inc., Boston, 2007.

43 FaHCSIA. 2003 (updated 2009), Occasional Paper No.10, Families of prisoners: Literature review on issues and difficulties, Australia, viewed 22 March 2012, <<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publicationsarticles/research/occasional/Documents/op10/contents.html>>.

44 A Hayes and M Gray, op. cit.

45 UNICEF and The Body Shop, *Behind Closed Doors: The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children*, UK, 2006, p.7.

developing a social inclusion agenda would involve creating a set of benchmarks and targets, with deadlines to accompany them.

As mentioned before, there can be multiple levels of exclusion, and people can experience it across different areas. Individuals and groups can be excluded from some parts of society, but given membership to others, sometimes simultaneously. In developing a set of benchmarks and targets, this is a very important factor to bear in mind. Social inclusion cannot be measured by, for example, full employment, as even with a job people can be excluded from other areas of society.

Outcomes-based reporting

In recent years there has been a shift towards measuring programs and agendas using an outcomes-based approach, rather than an outputs-based reporting system

Traditional outputs-based reporting seeks quantitative, numerical reports, normally the number of clients who have accessed a particular program and how much money has been spent on a service. In contrast, outcomes-based reporting is a system of evaluating the impacts, changes or benefits to individuals and groups as a result of services or programs they engage in.⁴⁶ These changes can be evaluated as

- a. Short-term outcomes (for example, new knowledge and skills);
- b. Intermediate-term outcomes (for example, a change in behaviour);
and
- c. Long-term outcomes (for example, a change in values, conditions or status).⁴⁷

For the measurement of success within something as broad as a social inclusion agenda, a focus on outcomes rather than outputs allows for the programs and services within that agenda to have flexible goals and benchmarks, and for there to be a focus on whether these programs are really making a difference for people.

Outcomes-based assessment and reporting systems can serve a dual purpose – as mentioned, to assess individual, and programs, progress and achievement, but also to measure system accountability.⁴⁸ This can also be looked at as a ‘results accountability’ approach. Results accountability is a

disciplined way of thinking and taking action that can be used to improve the quality of life in communities, cities, counties, states and nations. [It]

46 C MacNamara, *Field Guide to Nonprofit Program Design, Market and Evaluation*, Authenticity Consulting LLC, Minneapolis, Minnesota, US, 2006, viewed 9 July 2012, <<http://managementhelp.org/evaluation/outcomes-evaluation-guide.htm#anchor153409>>.

47 Ibid.

48 G Brindley, ‘Outcomes-based assessment and reporting in language learning programmes: a review of the issues’, *Language Testing*, vol. 15, no. 1, p. 45-85, Sage Publications. 1998.

can also be used to improve the performance of programs, agencies and service systems.⁴⁹

A results accountability approach includes asking four questions to monitor performance measures:

1. How much did we do?
2. How well did we do it?
3. How hard did we try? and
4. What change did we produce?⁵⁰

Using these four questions to provide a loose framework to guide the setting of benchmarks and targets for a social inclusion agenda, as well as ensuring the focus is on an outcomes-based approach, rather than outputs-based system, will ensure such an agenda is striving to measure the impact its services and programs have on people's lives, rather than simply counting the number of people who use it.

Consultation

Throughout the process of developing and implementing a social inclusion agenda, robust consultation with the wider community needs to be maintained and the outcomes from such consultations should inform the development of policy. As should be the case when a government is developing any form of social policy, it is inherently important that the individuals for whom the policy will have the most impact are engaged with from the very outset. Thus a well structured process of consultation with policy advocates and service providers and people affected by social exclusion and poverty should be included in the development and implementation of a social inclusion agenda.⁵¹

Roles – government, individuals, community sector

In the implementation of any policies and programs arising from an agenda, it is important to acknowledge the different roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders. In the case of a social inclusion agenda, three important stakeholders can be identified – government (at both the federal and state/territory level), individuals and, perhaps most importantly, the community sector.

49 M Friedman, *Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough*, FPSI Publishing, United States, 2005, p. 11.

50 Ibid. p. 67

51 Australian Council of Social Service, op. cit

Government

Social inclusion and exclusion cannot be examined without taking into consideration the role of the state, and its governing body. Government intervention plays a major role in creating social inclusion and, conversely, social exclusion, sometimes simultaneously. As the leading body of the state/territory, local governments have the power and resources to design, develop and implement a social inclusion agenda, and can have strong input into the factors which contribute to social exclusion, particularly around poverty.⁵² In addition, local governments play an important role as they administer funding for, and sometimes run, many of the services that are fundamental in tackling social exclusion as defined and funded by the Federal Government.⁵³

Individuals

Individuals are important stakeholders, especially those who are already service consumers and/or at risk of social exclusion. As discussed previously, proper consultation with such groups is important in order to formulate a truly inclusive social inclusion agenda which is reflective of the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society.

Community Sector

The last, and perhaps most important player in the creation and implementation of a social inclusion agenda, is the community sector. Acting in some way as the 'middle man' between individuals and the community, and government agencies, community sector organisations play a vital role in the implementation of any social inclusion agenda.⁵⁴ Diverse and covering many of the areas which play a role in social inclusion - including housing, mental health, and education - the real value in these types of organisations are the localised services they provide, which create social connections for people who may otherwise be isolated from the community.

The community sector also provides a vital link for government agencies, at all levels, to service consumers who may be wary of dealing directly with such bodies. Having already established relationships with individuals at risk of, or already experiencing, social exclusion, community organisations can help people identify the services and support they need, and feed this information back to government.

Community sector organisations are also important in that they truly understand the value of a socially inclusive approach to addressing disadvantage. As the CEO of a children's service succinctly declares

52 P Saunders, op. cit.

53 Australian Council of Social Service, op. cit.

54 A Ride, *Building Social Inclusion in Australia: priorities for the social and community services sector workforce*, discussion paper commissioned by the Australian Services Union, Victoria, 2007.

We shouldn't need to focus on inclusion if our services operate in ways that don't exclude anyone in the first place.⁵⁵

Testing and evaluating

The final step in the development and implementation of a social inclusion agenda is the evaluation of such an agenda, and the policies, programs and services which come under it. Regular collection of data against the before-mentioned benchmarks and targets is needed. A proper, and potentially independent, analysis of such data is also required to examine whether the agenda is working and where changes need to be made. As mentioned before, taking an outcomes-based approach to measuring the success of a social inclusion agenda, rather than an outputs-based system, allows for greater flexibility and a real understanding of how the programs and services within the agenda are impacting on and benefiting people.

⁵⁵ Quoted in M Sims, *Social Inclusion and the Early Years Learning Framework: a way of working*, Pademelon Press, NSW, 2011, p.vi.

Conclusion

The terms social inclusion and social exclusion are relatively new to the public policy discourse in Australia, having arisen in Europe during the last few decades. While the concepts are hard to define, they can bring broader level of understanding of the causes of disadvantage as more than poverty, and thus guide government policies in addressing these other factors.

In developing a social inclusion agenda for any state or territory in Australia, priority needs to be given to the areas which require focus. The current Australian Social Inclusion Board has identified important areas of focus, including older women experiencing homelessness, and disadvantaged job seekers. However, in order to have a truly inclusive society, attention must be paid to those who are most at risk of social exclusion. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are amongst the most disadvantaged in Australia, across multiple factors, and a social inclusion agenda should focus on addressing this disadvantage. Having established priority areas, the next steps for a social inclusion agenda would be to set benchmarks and targets, and to engage in proper consultation with stakeholders. In particular, the community sector plays a vital role in addressing social exclusion and as such, should help inform a social inclusion agenda. A social inclusion agenda should be reflective and responsive, and informed by data and evidence.

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