

AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL INCLUSION BOARD

Outcomes of the Board meeting on 26 February, 2009

Chair's report

The Board noted potential conflicts of interest from Board members.

The Board noted the Chair's report on key discussions and developments since the November 2008 meeting.

The Board thanked Director Fiona Stanley and noted the work of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, particularly its research and advocacy role in relation to major diseases affecting young people.

Compendium of headline social inclusion indicators

The Board endorsed a draft compendium of headline social inclusion indicators as a publication for consultation and discussion, subject to consideration of some changes and additions.

The Indicators Working Group and the Social Inclusion Unit will undertake further writing and editing of the compendium for endorsement at the next Board meeting, along with a plan for its release.

Social inclusion policy statement and a national action plan for social inclusion

Framework for social inclusion

The Board noted an overview on a draft framework for social inclusion by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and provided comments on the directions and priorities outlined.

Locational Approaches

Board members agreed to provide comments on proposed methods of identifying locations that are vulnerable to economic downturn, locations where vulnerable new arrivals are settling and analysis of intersecting issues in disadvantaged and vulnerable locations.

The Board will consider final advice on these issues, and the selection of small locations that are deeply disadvantaged, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, at the next meeting.

Jobless Families

The Board noted the draft paper on supporting the jobless through the economic downturn which will be developed for discussion at the next Board meeting.

The Board noted the Chair's role in the *Getting Communities Working Fund* as part of the government's \$42 billion stimulus package.

The Board noted Minister O'Connor's response to the Board's proposed jobless pilot and the invitation to participate in consultations on the review of the Indigenous Employment Program.

Children at risk

The Board noted the Children at Risk Working Group's upcoming consultation on the National Early Childhood Development strategy.

W.A. Commissioner for Children & Young People

The Board noted a presentation from the W.A. Commissioner for Children & Young People on her role and of particular issues facing young people in W.A. The Board heard an overview of

particular difficulties faced by indigenous and vulnerable children and those living in remote communities.

Influencing mainstream policy

Close the Gap campaign

The Board noted a presentation by Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner on the Close the Gap campaign and race and indigenous issues.

Tax Review

The Board noted a presentation on the tax review by the Department of the Treasury.

The Board agreed to provide written advice to the Tax Review Panel to ensure that social inclusions issues are brought to their attention.

Mainstream programs

The Board noted a paper on how mainstream programs could better support the most disadvantaged.

The Board agreed to advise the Government that:

- a socially inclusive approach to program design and service delivery involves an integrated suite of programs built from a universal platform, designed and supported by a workforce, to be flexible, responsive, accessible, culturally competent and can dedicate more resources to those that need them.
- Effective universal program design includes:
 - Early intervention and support – preventing escalation of problems and ensure adequate follow-up.
 - Flexibility of access – multiple communication channels, opening hours and general convenience;
 - Personalised service delivery – service delivery staff must be unthreatening and trustworthy;
 - Effective communication – cultural sensitivity and awareness of different communication needs;
 - Holistic services – the ability to deal with interconnected problems and concerns;
 - Working in partnerships with the community – working with formal and informal leadership and brokers in the community to support access.

The Board agreed that mainstream programs must accept responsibility for all clients.

Communications

The Board agreed to advise Government:

- That there would be value in further investigating social marketing, as part of a broader communications strategy, in formulating a national plan for social inclusion, noting there are risks that a marketing campaign can be detrimental (rather than merely ineffective) if proper research is not undertaken.
- Elements of a multi-faceted communications strategy to achieve social inclusion objectives could include:
 - Direct participation programs – locally based contact between groups on a grassroots level;

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- Programs to build socially inclusive behaviour through schools and educational institutions;
- Training for service delivery staff to improve the delivery of services
- Linking social inclusion to existing social marketing campaigns or special days; and
- Community engagement mechanisms which give excluded groups a voice.

Measuring social inclusion

Measuring Framework

The Board hear from the Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on a proposed performance measurement and reporting framework for social inclusion.

The Board provided comments on the proposed areas for headline indicators and will consider further framework at its May 2009 meeting.

Index

The Board agreed that a single indicator or index of social inclusion could be valuable as a communication device to identify how social inclusion in Australia is changing over time.

The Board will consider options for a single index at its August 2009 meeting, following further development of the performance and reporting framework for social inclusion and completion by the Brotherhood of St Laurence of a feasibility study into a single indicator.

Administration

The Board noted correspondence, future meetings and speaking engagements.

The Board noted support for recent initiatives with links to social inclusion being progressed by the Government.