

AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL INCLUSION BOARD

Record of the meeting of the Board on 10 September, 2008

Chair's report on meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister

The Board noted the outcomes of the Chair's meeting on 12 August 2008 with the Deputy Prime Minister.

Locational Approaches

The Board considered a methodology for selection of priority locations and agreed to continue its development. It was noted that discussions with State and Territory and local governments about possible locations would be important and that commitment from all levels of government will be needed.

The Board requested further information be provided on the experience of international and national locational- based programs, to inform the development of a model for a multilayered approach to locational interventions and a menu of recommended activities.

Jobless Families

The Board considered a number of papers and heard from policy advisors and experts including Professor Peter Whiteford (Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales), the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and from the South Australian Social Inclusion Unit. The presentations covered many aspects of the dynamics of jobless families in the Australian context. The Board was particularly interested in a principle of whole of family approaches to working with jobless families.

It also considered it would be important that new employment services arrangements be based on approaches that would promote social inclusion and best meet the needs of jobless families. The Board will continue to develop its analysis in this area.

Children at Greatest Risk of Long Term Disadvantage

The Board agreed that school attendance is very important for children's wellbeing and to the social inclusion agenda. It considered that some children may be experiencing a range of barriers to school attendance, that could be addressed through socially inclusive approaches, including through improving community engagement and parental capacity (including health, education, substance use issues, homelessness and others).

The Board also finalised its preliminary synopsis ([Attachment A](#)) of what works in relation to programs for kids at risk and these are now available on the website.

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Infrastructure to support social inclusion

The Board considered draft social inclusion principles and will work to develop a communications strategy for consideration at the November meeting.

The Board heard from Professor Peter Saunders, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales on indicators of exclusion, and considered papers provided by Board members and the SIU on this area.

The Board agreed to consider the feasibility of developing an index of social inclusion that provides a simple, high level indicator of the state and direction of social inclusion in Australia, which can be broken down to give comparisons for different population groups and geography.

Elements of successful programs and services for children at greatest risk of long-term disadvantage

Intervention Points

- ▣ Transition points (for example from hospital to home, home to educational setting) provide excellent opportunities for intervention, as change is already occurring; and
- ▣ The earlier the intervention (before a behaviour becomes entrenched) the better.

Environment

- ▣ Conversationally rich;
- ▣ Stimulating;
- ▣ Non-threatening;
- ▣ Respectful; and
- ▣ Welcoming.

Setting

- ▣ Quality training for professionals and volunteers;
- ▣ Quality settings including low child-teacher ratios in educational settings; and
- ▣ Home visits help to engage those who may not take part in a more formal setting and engage people directly in the environment that may need to change.

Active involvement of the family

- ▣ Importance of parent-child interactions for positive outcomes;
- ▣ Support to participate is required;
- ▣ Focus on capacity and strengths;
- ▣ Families, with support, should be actively involved in problem solving and decision making about their circumstances; and
- ▣ Quality relationships and a partnership approach with facilitators/professionals essential.

Multi-layered and multifaceted

- ▣ Effective partnerships between organisations to provide integrated services;
- ▣ Single entry point to all services; and
- ▣ Providing a range of services to deal with differing needs.

Involvement of community

- ▣ Involving the community in development and delivery of programs can add a depth of understanding of resources and barriers to participation;
- ▣ Providing opportunities for parents to connect with others in the community; and
- ▣ Building on community strengths and capacity in the process.

Program

- ❑ Evidence based or have a strong evaluation component;
- ❑ Child and family focused;
- ❑ Flexible to be culturally aware and respond to individual needs;
- ❑ Build on strengths;
- ❑ Structured or formal topics are not always necessary, role modelling effective;
- ❑ Delivered by highly skilled, committed professionals and volunteers;
- ❑ Long term – beginning during pregnancy and sustained; and
- ❑ Delivery in partnership with a widely recognised and respected organisation valuable.

Access

- ❑ The most disadvantaged may require practical assistance with: transport, cost, flexible opening hours, flexible settings (i.e. formal settings may be threatening), care for children;
- ❑ Some families may need additional support to be organised to participate. For sustained participation, they may also require support to develop resilience to be able to deal with things that happen out of the ordinary or setbacks.