

AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL INCLUSION BOARD

Record of the meeting of the Board on 19 November, 2008

Welcome by Victoria University

The Board thanked Vice Chancellor Professor Elizabeth Harman and noted the diversity of the Victoria University community and the University's inclusive approaches.

Chair's report on meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister

The Board noted the outcomes of the Chair and Vice Chair's meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister on 6 November 2008. The Board agreed to develop advice on what works to support areas of potential disadvantage such as growth areas, including what population cohorts are most vulnerable such as youth.

Locational approaches

The Board:

- endorsed a 5-step methodology for selecting priority locations to assist children at risk and jobless families in deeply disadvantaged locations, namely:
 1. For each suburb the population of people residing in the most disadvantaged five per cent of collection districts nationally is calculated.
 2. A Geographic Information System is used to identify any single suburbs or clusters of suburbs where over 3000 persons (2000 in rural areas) reside in one of the most disadvantage five per cent of suburbs.
 3. These areas are cross-referenced against other key indicators of disadvantage.
 4. The refined list is used as a basis for consultation with states and territories to help refine the list of priority interventions and identify potential strategic options for collaboration.
 5. Consideration is given to including at least one location below the 2000 person threshold and at least one trial based on a larger regionally focused approach.
- agreed to advise the Deputy Prime Minister that the effectiveness of place-based initiatives to address multiple and entrenched disadvantage depends upon:
 - › gaining the comprehensive involvement of stakeholders and all levels of government;
 - › the clear identification of evidence-based locality-relevant goals and implementation plans to improve the life opportunities of disadvantaged individuals and families;
 - › creating organisational structures and management which effectively blend the pursuit of specified, tangible goals and improvements, with the continuous strengthening of community capacities;
 - › progressive monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategies, structures and outcomes; and

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- › maintaining the investment in the initiatives for a sufficient period – generally no less than eight years – to consolidate and sustain improvements and community capacity development.
- agreed to advise the Deputy Prime Minister that, to ensure the success of locational interventions to address concentrated disadvantage, the government will need to make a long-term commitment (e.g. 8 years) to the following:
 - › Supporting better facilitation and coordination on the ground;
 - › Prioritising resources to the selected locations;
 - › Supporting flexible and innovative local governance structures;
 - › Strengthening community capacity;
 - › Working with states, local government and the community sector;
 - › Providing flexible resources to fund local innovations to address local needs;
 - › Leading cultural change;
 - › Actively engaging the corporate sector, including local businesses.
- asked the Locational Working Group to develop advice, for consideration at the February Board meeting, on:
 - › criteria and methodology to identify neighbourhoods at risk of emerging disadvantage, including in outer metropolitan growth areas; and
 - › how to progress location-based approaches to addressing disadvantage in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Jobless families

The Board:

- agreed that the following principles should be used in developing and assessing proposals for jobless families:
 - › Capitalise on existing infrastructure;
 - › Use innovative design;
 - › Provide a coherent package of integrated services;
 - › Take a family centred, multilayered, strengths-based approach;
 - › Have a community focus;
 - › Include creative partnerships between all levels of government;
 - › Interventions should be focussed on transition points;
 - › Operate on a sufficient scale to have measurable impact within defined timeframes; and
 - › Build in performance monitoring and evaluation.

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- agreed on the elements of a socially inclusive service for the jobless which could demonstrate these principles, for development and piloting;
- agreed that issues for further consideration by the jobless working group might include:
 - › Supporting inclusion for sole parents with young children through a balanced view of participation and parenting;
 - › Investigating the appropriate level of income support for parents commencing participation requirements;
 - › The importance of support systems such as health, child care etc;
 - › The role of broader policy instruments, including tax and transfer payments; and
 - › The role of enterprise and self employment in tackling joblessness, including through support to start businesses and establishment of social enterprises.
- noted the Board's submission to the Review of Indigenous Employment Programs and Community Development Employment Projects and asked that the submission be updated to emphasise the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and managed enterprise in supporting self-determination and economic development and to highlight the responsibility of policy-makers and providers to deliver quality services.

Homelessness White Paper

The Board heard from the Hon. Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Housing on the government's goals and programs to address homelessness and progress update on the Homelessness White Paper. The Board raised with the Minister issues including the declining availability of low-cost options, possible incentives to increase affordable housing development and the exploitation and discrimination that disadvantaged groups such as refugees can face when accessing housing in the private market.

Children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage

The Board heard from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs on developments in programs for children at risk.

The Board expressed the need for government to develop programs based on social inclusion principles that create partnerships with clients and place responsibility on service providers to find solutions.

The Board will continue to develop its analysis on pathways and transition points that will provide best-possible outcomes for children at risk.

Infrastructure to support social inclusion

The Board:

- noted progress on the development of a compendium of headline indicators that will inform the direction and issues for further work by the Board;

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- requested further information on the advantages and disadvantages of a single index to measure social inclusion;
- agreed to develop a document summarising social inclusion, jobless families and children at risk principles to guide local social inclusion activity, to be published on the website;
- noted the updated record of Board consultations on the mental health and disability agenda and agreed that it would be made available on the social inclusion website;
- expressed concern about the messages and values that may be communicated to excluded individuals, families and communities by service providers and the media and discussed potential avenues for communication of social inclusion messages and values to:
 - › increase respect and empathy for vulnerable groups;
 - › build positive identity and confidence in diverse communities;
 - › increase respect and dignity in the provision of public services; and
 - › increase awareness and understanding of social inclusion.