



# Social Inclusion Principles for Australia

## Aspirational Principles

<b>1</b>	<b>Reducing disadvantage</b>
Making sure people in need benefit from access to good health, education and other services	Funding and service delivery should promote equitable access to universal benefits and services for Australians in all their diversity, and invest more intensively in those at risk of, or experiencing, social exclusion.
<b>2</b>	<b>Increasing social, civil and economic participation</b>
Helping everyone get the skills and support they need so they can work and connect with community, even during hard times	<p>Maximum participation in economic, social and community life is a defining characteristic of an inclusive society. Achieving this outcome for all Australians means delivering policies and programs which support people to learn and strengthen their ability to participate actively in the labour market and in their communities.</p> <p>Over time people's opportunities and capabilities are formed through their experience of family life and their participation in the communities, economies and institutions around them. People with well-established social networks and institutional connections are more likely to deal successfully with personal crisis and economic adversity. Policy design should be mindful of costs and benefits and the evidence about returns for investments. Resources should be weighted towards tailored approaches for those most in need while maintaining universal access and participation in services and community life. Services should be responsive to the diverse attributes, circumstances and aspirations of their clients.</p> <p>A key aspect of boosting participation is capacity building – supporting individuals' personal capacity to address the issues that arise over the course of their lives, and supporting people to take independent decisions and to negotiate priorities through participation in their workplaces, their neighbourhoods and their communities. This is especially true for communities struggling with intergenerational disadvantage.</p>

3

### A greater voice, combined with greater responsibility

Governments and other organisations giving people a say in what services they need and how they work, and people taking responsibility to make the best use of the opportunities available

Achieving social inclusion depends on the active involvement of the entire community. Providing opportunities for citizens and communities to identify their needs and give feedback about the design and delivery of policies and programs will be important.

Individuals and service users must have a say in shaping their own futures and the benefits and services that are offered to them. Detailed feedback from users and community members and genuine and inclusive consultation are important sources of information to improve policy settings and service delivery.

Where people are part of a democratic community and able to access opportunities, benefits and services, they also have an obligation to use their best efforts and take personal responsibility for taking part and making progress.

Organisations—both government and non-government—also have responsibilities to listen and respond, and to make sure their policies, programs and services help to build social inclusion.

## Principles of Approach

4

### Building on individual and community strengths

Making the most of people's strengths, including the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from other cultures

Taking a strength-based, rather than a deficit-based, approach means respecting, supporting and building on the strengths of individuals, families, communities and cultures. Assuming, promoting and supporting a strong and positive view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and culture will be particularly important ways to reduce social exclusion for Indigenous Australians, working in parallel with specific initiatives to improve their health, education, housing and employment prospects. Recognising the varied and positive contributions of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will also be an important feature of the social inclusion approach.

5

### Building partnerships with key stakeholders

Governments, organisations and communities working together to get the best results for people in need

All sectors have a role to play in building a more socially inclusive Australia and the approach will rely on encouraging and supporting the diverse contribution of all. Strong relationships between government and these other stakeholders are key to achieving the joined up approach required for sustainable outcomes and to sharing expertise to produce innovative solutions.

Building effective partnerships to tackle shared priorities is essential to improving social inclusion over time. Whether in forming city wide plans to reduce homelessness, or strengthening service provision in parts of the community sector, or jointly investing in new social innovations, policy on social inclusion needs to advance work through a diverse range of cross sector partnerships.

## 6

### Developing tailored services

Services working together in new and flexible ways to meet each person's different needs

For some members of the Australian population experiencing, or at immediate risk of, significant exclusion, mainstream services may not be sufficient or appropriate to mitigate against exclusion.

Deep, intensive interventions tailored at an individual, family or community level are one way to support those experiencing deep and complex social exclusion, by helping them tackle their actual problems. Different service providers may need to link together to do this. For example, linking health and family support services may make the most difference to parents of children at risk. Linking employment preparation effectively with drug or alcohol treatment may be necessary as a pathway out of homelessness.

Successfully overcoming social exclusion may also involve learning to change deeply held attitudes and behaviours, for example through anger management or family counselling, in order to access new opportunities.

Overcoming the fragmentation of government service systems for people at high risk of social exclusion, and in relation to important milestones in the lifecycle, such as transitions from adolescence to adulthood or the end of working life, is a priority.

## 7

### Giving a high priority to early intervention and prevention

Heading off problems by understanding the root causes and intervening early

It is important to tackle the immediate problems of social exclusion that many face, such as homelessness. But in the longer term it is clearly preferable to prevent such problems arising in the first place.

Identifying the root causes of disadvantage and the connections between different types of disadvantage allows interventions to be designed to prevent the occurrence of problems and provide more effective support to those who are vulnerable before the disadvantage becomes entrenched. This is particularly important in preventing intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. Universal services such as schools and hospitals provide a range of opportunities to identify those at risk of disadvantage at an early stage. Giving priority to early intervention and prevention means focusing on children and young people, on the early identification of potential problems, and on taking effective action to tackle them.

## 8

### Building joined-up services and whole of government(s) solutions

Getting different parts and different levels of government to work together in new and flexible ways to get better outcomes and services for people in need

The multifaceted nature of social exclusion means that the services offered by any one agency can only go so far in meeting the complex needs of a person or groups of people. Separate silos of funding, policy-making and service delivery can be systemic barriers to providing effective support.

Flexibility and cooperation across agencies, both between Commonwealth agencies and across levels of government, is one key to comprehensively address social exclusion. Integration, transparency and collaboration between Commonwealth, State and Territory governments are particularly important. Priorities include:

- taking a 'people-first' view of what people and communities need, using evidence about their actual experiences and life outcomes;
- developing policy through integrated, problem-solving projects which draw together all relevant agencies and knowledge; and
- developing programs within a comprehensive social inclusion framework, researching and understanding the links between programs operating on the ground, and working across all levels of government, including through the Council of Australian Governments, to join up service delivery in strategic as well as practical ways.

9

## Using evidence and integrated data to inform policy

Finding out what programs and services work well and understanding why, so you can share good ideas, keep making improvements and put your effort into the things that work

Progress towards social inclusion must be accompanied by better information, faster learning and better use of knowledge to improve outcomes. As far as possible, interventions should draw on:

- practical experience of community and other delivery organisations;
- existing research and the evidence base on what works; and
- monitoring and evaluating strategies as they develop, focusing on outcomes as well as processes.

To the extent that interventions are experimental, they should be designed and evaluated in a way which builds on this evidence base.

It will also be important for government to report regularly on progress in social inclusion, using clear indicators and reporting from the perspective of the individual, the family, the neighbourhood or the community affected. Indicators should be responsive to effective policy interventions and identify the essence of the problem and have a clear and accepted interpretation.

10

## Using locational approaches

Working in places where there is a lot of disadvantage, to get to people most in need and to understand how different problems are connected

Evidence show that different kinds of disadvantage can be concentrated in particular locations in Australia.

Focusing effort on building social inclusion in particular locations, neighbourhoods and communities can ensure that they are not left behind, and help us learn how planning, economic development, community engagement and service delivery can be integrated to achieve better overall outcomes.

11

## Planning for sustainability

Doing things that will help people and communities deal better with problems in the future, as well as solving the problems they face now

Policies and programs should be focused on long-term sustainable improvement. To do this, it is important to ensure that interventions build an individual's capacity and develop protective factors that will enable them to self-manage through life-course events.

For the government, it will be important to establish benchmarks and adopt formal quantified targets that are ambitious but attainable, measurable and time specific, focus on long term policy goals, and integrate long term social inclusion objectives in broader reform efforts, such as budgetary reform and reforms being pursued through the Council of Australian Governments.