

People and Community at the Heart of Systems and Bureaucracy



South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative



February 2009



Government
of South Australia

Glossary

The term 'Aboriginal' is used in this document as inclusive of all Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The term 'Reference' refers to the area of policy advice and action undertaken by the Social Inclusion Board at the request of the Premier.

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PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY AT THE HEART OF SYSTEMS AND BUREAUCRACY: SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S SOCIAL INCLUSION INITIATIVE

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MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

In seeking to explain why I established South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative within days of being elected in 2002, I have to refer to the late Don Dunstan.

He was State Premier and social reformer during the late 1960s, and again in the 1970s.

Don Dunstan was at the centre of social reform and policy innovation in South Australia and nationally and in 1976, it was he who said: "What we are out to do is to see that every citizen in society has the social, economic, educational, cultural and recreational wherewithal to enjoy life and draw the most personal satisfaction from it".

It is this philosophy – from a man I considered a mentor and a friend – that I carry with me today.

Don Dunstan's profound and enduring contribution to social reform was the result of innovative thinking, and was the reason that I established the Social Inclusion Initiative – to provide a mechanism to explore new approaches to the issue of people trapped in disadvantage. To include those who are socially excluded.

South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative is based on the British Government of Tony Blair's Social Exclusion Unit.

However, because 'inclusion' is what we are about, I wanted the name to reflect that.

With a reputation of being caring but tough, Monsignor David Cappo, the Catholic Vicar-General in Adelaide, was the obvious choice (to me) to develop and drive this policy to suit our State's needs.

He is impatient to achieve change, even now – after six years of reform – and he remains bold in his approach to social policy. That is why he has a mandate from me to intervene and confront issues.

With the help of a Board made up of innovative thinkers rather than representatives of interest groups, and through its semi-independent status, the Social Inclusion Initiative has been able to break down the 'silo' approach, ensuring government agencies work together and in partnership with the community sector.

By doing this, it can confront the complex causes of social exclusion rather than just the symptoms.

The Initiative's success speaks for itself.

The most recent inner city street counts indicate that the number of people sleeping rough within the city of Adelaide has been virtually halved.

This has been achieved through the Social Inclusion Initiative programs such as *Street to Home* and *Common Ground*.

With a joined-up approach that includes not just accommodation, but also connection to drug and alcohol and mental health support services, we have been able to house people who were previously in the 'too hard' basket.



Mike Rann
Premier of South Australia
Minister for Social Inclusion

A School Retention Action Plan with \$28.4 million of investment over four years saw 15,600 young South Australians who had disengaged or were at risk of disengaging from the traditional secondary education sector, reconnected with learning.

Recommendations from the Social Inclusion Board have led to a plan to radically overhaul mental health services in South Australia, with a commitment of \$130 million to better address the needs of people with complex mental health issues.

South Australia's Aboriginal people are considered in all Social Inclusion Initiatives, with the improvement of their health being a major driver.

A focus on sport, recreation and the arts is helping to make significant inroads.

We are also very proud that after our intervention in the traditional Aboriginal Lands in the north of South Australia, the incidence of petrol sniffing reduced by 83 per cent between the years of 2004 and 2007.

Youth offending is also an issue being addressed through recommendations from Monsignor Cappo's *To Break the Cycle* report.

However, there is a long way to go and the Social Inclusion Initiative continues to look for innovative ways to address these existing issues and those of the future, such as ensuring everyone benefits from the opportunities in growth sectors in South Australia, such as mining and defence.

It is incumbent on us all to do whatever it takes to enable everyone to fulfil their potential in the society in which they live.

That is why the Social Inclusion Initiative has my commitment as Premier and as Minister for Social Inclusion, and the commitment of Ministers and department heads.

That is why its goals are embedded in South Australia's Strategic Plan – because the success of individuals is inextricably linked to the success of this State.

But the Social Inclusion Initiative relies not just on government, but also on partnerships – a partnership with communities to work towards social justice and inclusion for all.

I am immensely proud of the achievements of the Social Inclusion Initiative to date, and I am grateful for the work of Monsignor Cappo and the Board in pursuing a philosophy laid down more than 30 years ago by Don Dunstan. ■



Mike Rann

Premier of South Australia
Minister for Social Inclusion





PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY AT THE HEART OF SYSTEMS AND BUREAUCRACY: SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S SOCIAL INCLUSION INITIATIVE



Monsignor David Cappo AO
Chair, Social Inclusion Board – South Australia
Commissioner for Social Inclusion – South Australia

In 2002 Premier Mike Rann asked me to join him in a meeting with UK Prime Minister Tony Blair at 10 Downing St. I went to this meeting eager to learn about the pioneering work of joined-up government and the Social Exclusion Unit that directly reported to the Prime Minister and was achieving excellent results. Immediately after our meeting with Prime Minister Blair I met with his senior social policy officials to get into the details of making joined-up government responses to social issues deliver results – real and tangible results.

From that influential and informative visit to London in 2002 South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative has developed. 'Joined-up responses to joined-up social problems' has become our mantra. We have taken the concept of joined-up government and developed it in ways that are innovative and creative. This has been a credit to the unswerving support and trust of Premier Mike Rann and his government. And it is testimony to many key elements working together: to the vision of those appointed to the Social Inclusion Board that sits outside of government but with the Premier's authority to connect with any level of his government; to the many people in the Social Inclusion Unit (a team of up to 20 staff located in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, but overseen from outside the public service, by the Chair of the Social Inclusion Board); and to key public servants who saw what was possible in a new era and grasped the opportunity for change.

South Australia has a history of leading social reform in our nation. During the 19th and 20th Centuries visionary South Australians moved us beyond a charity model of social welfare to social justice for all, particularly the most vulnerable in our community. In the 21st Century we have added to this fine tradition with the development of a unique social innovation: a particular method of 'DOING' social inclusion that puts people and community at the heart of systems and bureaucracy. It is this 'doing' of social inclusion that we have honed into a sharp but flexible model of intervention, allowing for swift change to occur and in a much shorter timeframe to see results 'on the table'.

In fact, South Australia's method of doing social inclusion is a method for our times. In the current complex and volatile global financial crisis, the South Australian method focuses not so much on seeking 'new money' from Treasury, although some new money is necessary, but on the re-direction of recurrent funding following rigorous evaluation of what's working and what's not working!

This method of social inclusion in South Australia is all about providing independent advice and embedding it within the processes of government. It involves an independent Board that retains the freedom of a 'strike force', to move swiftly and across normal government boundaries. It focuses thinking, policy formation, program development and 'on the ground' responses. It monitors and evaluates. It intervenes and corrects. It challenges and it supports. It delivers in a much shorter time frame than standard policy implementation.

What is social inclusion? Many definitions abound. I have never focused on any one definition in particular. Rather, I believe we need to use keywords and concepts to describe social inclusion. The concept of social inclusion is a step beyond the poverty debates over the last few decades. It means 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. These are all vital issues on the table of social inclusion.

This is what we are about: to continue to build the community of this State.

Since its inception in 2002, South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative has been contributing to the social good of South Australia in its work on:

Homelessness;

Drug abuse;

Aboriginal health and wellbeing;

School retention;

Youth offending;

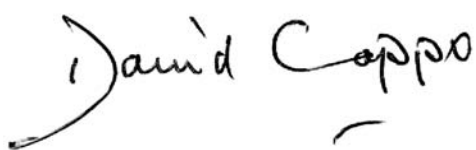
Mental health; and

Disability services.

Its new work in ensuring that a social benefit is gained from economic growth areas over the next decade, such as the mining and defence industries, and developing innovation in motivating and skilling a significant population of South Australians who have been in economic and social disadvantage, sometimes for generations, is now on the Social Inclusion agenda.

I am indebted to the Members of the Social Inclusion Board for their strong social policy leadership and advice over the years. This has contributed considerably to the success of the Initiative.

I am so very grateful to the South Australian community for their support in recognising that we can't leave anyone to languish on the edges of our society. We must always act to bring them closer to the centre. That's what we are committed to doing. That's what the method and the actions of social inclusion in South Australia are about. ■

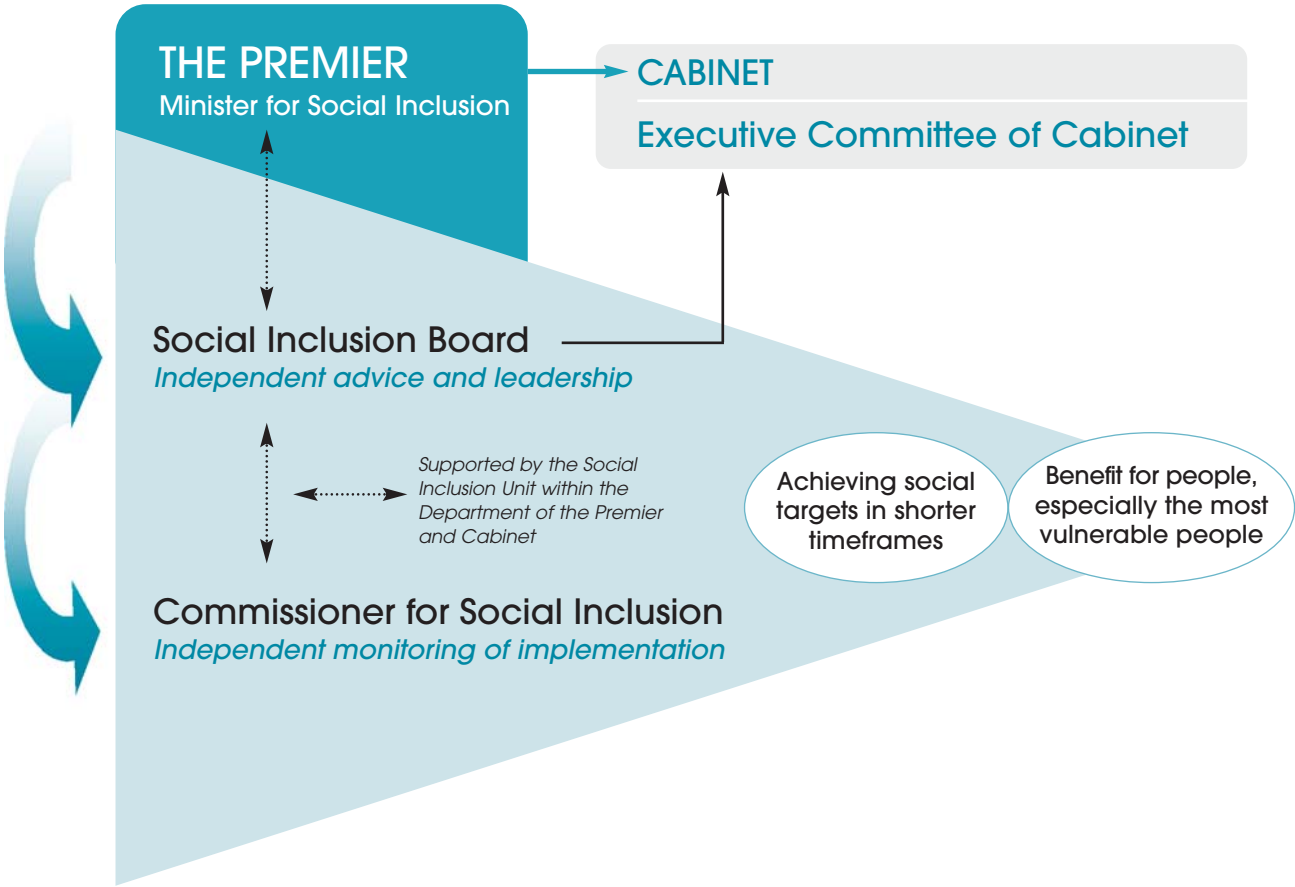


Monsignor David Cappo AO

Chair, Social Inclusion Board – South Australia

Commissioner for Social Inclusion – South Australia

Diagram 1 > The Structure of South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative





WHAT IS SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S SOCIAL INCLUSION INITIATIVE?

Introduction

The Premier of South Australia, the Hon Mike Rann MP, established the Social Inclusion Initiative in 2002 – just days after becoming Premier. While he drew extensively on the ideas of the Blair Labour Government in Britain, which had set up a Social Exclusion Unit in 1997, the Premier called on South Australia's record of social innovation and its history of serious commitment to social justice to frame an agenda for this new work.

The Social Inclusion Initiative has become the bedrock of South Australia's approach to delivering public value to the most marginalised people through joined-up government. More specifically it has become what Premier Rann called for: a new method driven by an independent champion and focused on fast action and results in addressing social needs in South Australia. In addition, closer links between social and economic development have been created.

The basic structure of the Initiative, represented in Diagram 1, has evolved from March 2002 until now. The Initiative has a direct reporting relationship to the Premier and operates with his mandate. The Social Inclusion Board has responsibility for developing policy advice, whereas the role of the Office of the Commissioner for Social Inclusion takes primary responsibility for monitoring implementation. The Chair, who is also Commissioner for Social Inclusion, sits on the Executive Committee of Cabinet¹ as an independent adviser and he is a member of the Economic Development Board. The Social Inclusion Unit supports both the Board and the Commissioner with expertise in the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data; the development of unique programs designed to bring about change as quickly as possible; innovative approaches to evaluation; development and maintenance of cross sector networks; and facilitating dialogue across the public sector and with community.

The Social Inclusion Initiative – the Board, Office of the Commissioner and the Unit – is physically located within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The Social Inclusion Initiative has priority access to the Premier. The Premier also continues to promote the overall vision of the Initiative through South Australia's Strategic Plan.² Targets arising from the work of the Initiative have now been incorporated into this Plan.

An area of policy advice and action taken on by the Social Inclusion Board at the Premier's request is called a 'Reference'.



¹ The Executive Committee of Cabinet was set up in 2005 to drive the implementation of South Australia's Strategic Plan. It consists of the Premier, the Treasurer, two other senior Government Ministers along with two independent advisers, the Chair of the Social Inclusion Board and the Chair of the Economic Development Board.

² For further information about South Australia's Strategic Plan go to www.saplan.org.au

Foundation Principles of the Social Inclusion Initiative

The vision for the Social Inclusion Initiative stems from these foundation principles:

- 1 All people possess an inalienable and equal human dignity. The imperative for fairness and justice for all, particularly the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people, derives from this principle.
- 2 Human dignity finds expression as people seek meaning, purpose and fulfilment in life through active engagement in family and community life.
- 3 Through life situations and unjust and unfair systems, many people and groups of people experience levels of disadvantage and disengagement, particularly from community, that limit their ability to live fulfilling lives. It is the responsibility of the community mainly through its government, but not exclusively, to re-engage within the life of the community people who are experiencing some form of disadvantage.
- 4 Increasing opportunities to participate in the economic and social life of the community, building people's capabilities and connecting them with community networks are effective means of re-engagement and building social inclusion.
- 5 Fundamental to engaging people in the economic and social life of the community is the importance of respecting people, their voices and their 'agency'.³
- 6 Caring roles and responsibilities are to be highly valued by and in community. The community itself takes on this role and responsibility for those in special need.
- 7 The major 'vehicles' used to engage or re-engage people and communities and to build capabilities and levels of functioning and to care for people are health (general health, mental health, dental health) systems, housing systems, education systems, systems for individual and family support and community living, skill development systems and employment.
- 8 Systems and bureaucracies must always be orientated to SERVE people and community and not vice versa.
- 9 Joined-up working can address more effectively the complex and inter-related needs of people. The organisational structures of systems and bureaucracy that create barriers must be addressed.

These principles underscore the importance of the quality of lived experience within contemporary communities. It is increasingly recognised that through cooperative engagement in and with community, individuals and families derive fulfilment: to enjoy life, to experience well-being through feelings of safety and security, to be productive and creative. All these aspects reflect a socially inclusive community that responds to the needs of individuals. Much depends on the opportunities people have to participate in economic and social life.

Social exclusion is insidious, with its different impacts experienced differently by individuals, families and groups within our society. It is clear though that in Australia, Aboriginal people as a group have experienced persistent and 'deep' social exclusion. Because of this, priority is given to addressing the needs of Aboriginal South Australians in the Reference work undertaken by the Social Inclusion Board.

³ In this context, 'agency' is identified with and values the lived experience of a person or groups of persons; it refers to the influence and control a person or groups of persons exert over their lives and actions through the choices and decisions they make. Consequently 'agency' has personal, social and political dimensions.



What makes South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative unique

What makes South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative unique is that it has created mechanisms that stand outside government bureaucracy, but are connected to, and work with, bureaucracy to deliver important reforms in critical social policy areas. The Social Inclusion Initiative operates from a 'people and community' centred paradigm, one that puts people and community at the heart of systems and bureaucracy.

The Initiative's 'people priority' approach to policy development begins with an evidence-based analysis of how systems are currently working in critical areas of service delivery like homelessness or mental health; identifies what is not working and what gaps exist; and proposes concrete reforms to policy and systems to meet people's real needs more effectively.

In Australia's system of government, as with other countries based on the Westminster system, departments inevitably approach issues through the lens of their own departmental responsibilities. Progress in developing and implementing policy is often measured through internal refinements to individual systems. This departmental approach frequently leads to systems operating in isolation and ultimately, fragmentation in service delivery. There is often little incentive for collaborative action across multiple agencies on policy development and service delivery. For many highly disadvantaged people, this means that their complex, multi-dimensional and inter-linked needs are not properly met.

For example, a young person who is living on the margins of a community may well be living in poverty, with substance misuse problems, borderline mental health issues, family violence at home, erratic school attendance and poor functional skills. The totality of these factors diminishes their life choices and the chance of effectively moving into further training and employment. ALL of these factors need to be managed holistically and comprehensively if the young person is to have a chance at a positive future. It is precisely this kind of multi-dimensional issue that is referred to the Social Inclusion Board for advice. The Board's commitment is to ensure that systems work for people, especially those experiencing significant disadvantage, who are frequently the least well served by all too often fragmented systems of government.

The Social Inclusion Initiative has a responsibility to break through systems and bureaucracy and deliver results in as short a timeframe as possible. It examines the needs of individuals experiencing specific types of disadvantage, including homelessness, mental health, disability and substance abuse and determines how systems need to change to deliver real benefit for each person.

“ This is an admirable program. ”

Jimmy Carter, Thirty-ninth President of the United States of America.

Personal correspondence to the Hon Mike Rann MP, Premier of South Australia received 15 Jan 2008



Joined-up services in action: an example

The Social Inclusion Initiative targets weaknesses in systems and practices that need to change. In addressing homelessness for example, the Board identified that important joined-up programs were missing for people who were homeless and also requiring health services. Many homeless support service providers knew that a large number of people they were assisting had significant health problems and were frequently attending a large inner-city hospital's emergency department. Health officials also knew that the hospital was servicing a number of people who were homeless.

When the Social Inclusion Board began looking at the experience of homelessness from the point of view of someone using these services, it became clear that adequate systems were not in place to link these people with services that would resolve their homelessness AND assist them to remain healthy.

Decisions and arrangements were made to establish a service known as the Transfer Liaison Officer Service to provide the crucial joined-up link between health and homeless services. Located in the hospital's emergency department, the Service ensures that homeless people are accessing appropriate accommodation and are remaining healthier by receiving coordinated post-discharge healthcare. 1,380 people have used this service, of whom 856 have been assisted into housing, in the past 4 years. This Service is one of the innovative programs resulting from the introduction in 2003 of the Social Inclusion Board's extensive 14 point Homelessness Action Plan. ■





HOW SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S SOCIAL INCLUSION METHOD WORKS

The Social Inclusion Initiative has developed and honed a distinct method of applying its theory of change to issues referred to the Board since 2002. The following section outlines both the fundamentals underlying South Australia's Social Inclusion method and the processes involved in its implementation.

PART A > The fundamentals of the Social Inclusion Method

The fundamentals are those elements that, working together, create a distinctive formula to ensure that the method is both innovative and effective.

Joined-up responses

- > For social policy to serve contemporary communities it must be based on a clear understanding that social problems are inter-related and therefore the solutions to those problems must be inter-related.
- > Joined-up responses that cut across and through government departments, and form partnerships with community and business, are instrumental to the delivery of the services required to meet the multi-dimensional issues confronting people, particularly people who are most disadvantaged in our society.
- > Joined-up responses allow a significant focus on prevention and early intervention strategies.

Mandated to act with the authority of the Head of Government

- > Directly mandated by the Head of Government (the Premier) to act, with his authority, to examine complex social problems and to find solutions to these.
- > Embedded at the heart of policy making in government with access to departments and agencies at any level.
- > Mandated to provide objective, readily implemented advice on changes to systems and related resources to the Premier for consideration by Cabinet.

High level of independence

- > An independent Chair and Board lead the Social Inclusion Initiative and oversee the work of the Social Inclusion Unit, which is embedded in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.
- > Through the Chair, the Board is accountable to the Premier as Minister for Social Inclusion for the provision of independent advice that can directly shape government social policy.
- > The position of Commissioner for Social Inclusion strengthens the direct and legitimate link with the State's public sector and all of its systems.
- > The independence of the Board allows it to establish working relationships with any and all levels of community, business, non-government organisations, government departments, agencies and staff.

Expert advice

- > Social Inclusion Board membership is based on expertise in social policy and social justice and community leadership, not representation or advocacy of specific interest groups.



“The Social Inclusion Initiative from South Australia illustrates the value of political recognition and strong commitment to inclusion and health equity. It demonstrates the merit of having an independent unit that facilitates, rather than manages, the processes of engagement required for social inclusion, and of having a strategic plan and setting targets for change.”

World Health Organization, Commission on Social Determinants of Health (2008) *Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health*. Final Report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health. Geneva, WHO pp160–161

- > The Initiative engages national and international experts to seek out best practice and works with these experts to find ways to adapt best practice to suit the South Australian context. Contextualising best practice is crucial and ensures that the best possible results are delivered.
- > In formulating advice, the Board’s independence enables objective analysis of social issues from outside the system, to explore the root causes and key drivers of social issues and to define the most effective actions to meet people’s needs. This:
 - creates an environment for analysis that promotes innovation and gets away from entrenched cultures of ‘business as usual’ and competition for funds that can exist between agencies; and
 - allows targeted analysis from a social inclusion perspective that can more easily articulate the ways in which government departments can operate differently to better meet the often complex, inter-linked and multi-dimensional needs of people.

Embedded in government

- > The Social Inclusion Unit (of up to 20 staff) in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, provides a conduit for the Social Inclusion Board to exercise its mandated authority to provide advice and actively monitor implementation by the relevant government departments.
- > The Social Inclusion Board has access to relevant information from departments and agencies and is able to engage in ongoing policy dialogue with them.
- > Through the Social Inclusion Unit a constructive relationship with Treasury is maintained throughout the stages of the development of a Reference.
- > The Chair of the Social Inclusion Board sits on the Executive Committee of Cabinet as an independent adviser on departmental performance in addressing the targets and timeframes within South Australia’s Strategic Plan.

Authority to monitor implementation

- > The Social Inclusion Initiative drives the implementation of its advice and guides evaluation through the Commissioner for Social Inclusion.
- > The role of the Commissioner ensures that the original intentions of the Social Inclusion Board’s advice are implemented so that real and sustained changes are made.
- > At the Board’s recommendation, an Inter-Ministerial Committee is established for each of the References. The Inter-Ministerial Committees oversee implementation; are chaired by a Government Minister identified as the ‘Lead’ Minister; include all relevant Government Ministers; and are attended by their departmental chief executives as well.
- > The Commissioner has a place on each Inter-Ministerial Committee to ensure that progress on implementation is rigorously monitored.

Highly skilled people are crucial

Appropriate structures and governance arrangements are fundamental to effective social inclusion policy and programs. However, successful outcomes also depend on supporting and resourcing highly skilled people in key positions with access to the authority and resources needed for policy and programs development and implementation. Personal qualities include the ability to navigate systems and the flexibility to respond to new agendas. Personnel selection and appointment is a high priority in ensuring the success of the Social Inclusion Initiative.

Part B > The process of the Social Inclusion Method

The Social Inclusion method has taken the usual steps of policy development and fashioned them into a new process that is more relevant to the task of delivering immediate benefit for people, especially the most vulnerable people in our community.

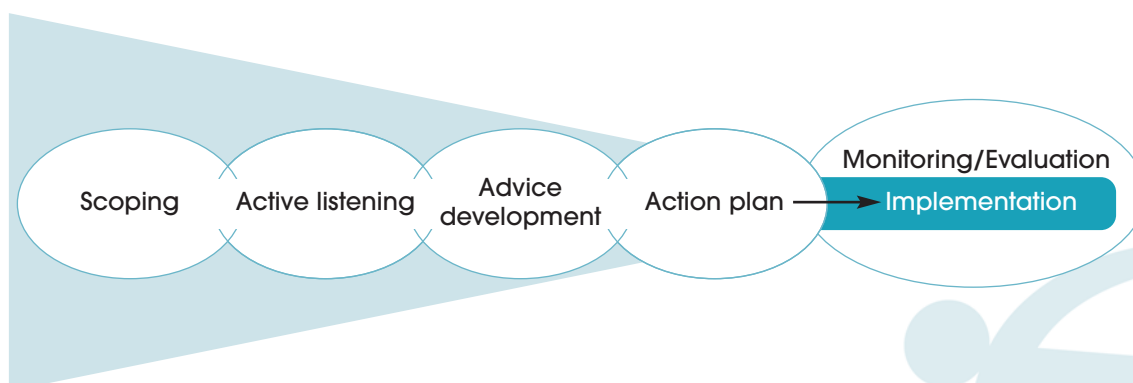
This is a five-stage process:

- 1 Scoping the issue
- 2 Actively listening
- 3 Developing advice
- 4 Constructing an action plan
- 5 Monitoring and evaluating implementation.

Streamlining of processes so that advice directly translates into timely action is very important. Between stages 4 and 5, Cabinet considers the advice and action plan. It is indicative of the quality of the advice and the inclusivity of the process that, to date, Cabinet has endorsed all Social Inclusion Initiative action plans in their entirety. Targets first outlined in the action plans have also been refined and embedded in South Australia's Strategic Plan.

While these stages are sequential in their commencement, they overlap in their execution and, for example, stages 1 and 2 can easily continue well into the undertaking of stages 3 and 4. The overlapping nature of stages in the process is illustrated in Diagram 2.

Diagram 2 > Stages of Policy Development used by the Social Inclusion Method



Everyone's Responsibility: Reducing Homelessness in South Australia

- > Data on homelessness for different population groups analysed in partnership with the Australian Bureau of Statistics
- > Weekend toll-free phone-in on homelessness open to all South Australians
- > Tracking the experience of homeless persons in their interactions with various services and systems
- > Building from place based action elsewhere: in New York *Common Ground* and in London, the UK Social Exclusion action plan on homelessness



Scoping the issue

For the Social Inclusion Initiative, scoping a Reference has several elements. It includes profiling the population in need, analysing place-based issues, reviewing the literature – both Australian and international – relevant to the Reference and identifying stakeholders and communities of interest. Detailed profiling for different population groups is vital in understanding the full dimensions and inter-relationship of complex issues in people's lives.

Mapping the relevant structures of government departments to clarify and understand their responsibilities and roles in any activity related to the Reference is also important. It invariably assists in navigating territorial issues, budgetary processes and inter and intra departmental politics.

The aim of the scoping process is to define the parameters of the Reference clearly and comprehensively at the earliest stage possible.

Active listening

In the area of social policy development consultations over the years have tended to draw on service providers who are often cast as the advocates for or intermediaries of affected communities; listening directly to the people who are most affected, does not always occur.

In addition, both individuals and community groups have too often experienced these consultations as 'one off' affairs that are increasingly disconnected from final policy outcomes.

The Social Inclusion Board's experience indicates that these kinds of consultations are invariably constrained by past experience, dominant ways of thinking and vested interests. Thus they rarely assist in defining the problem adequately and the ideas presented for moving forward are often limited and with a tendency to err on the side of maintaining the status quo.

The emergence of an 'active listening' approach to consultation, an approach that values the agency of citizens, has been vital for the Social Inclusion Board to overcome these challenges. Providing an opportunity for the people who are most affected to be heard and involving the full diversity of stakeholders is critical to the credibility of the process. Active listening is an open-minded consultation process that moves beyond identifying the problem to **seeking out solutions from interested parties**. This process legitimises the knowledge base held by citizens, community organisations and other stakeholders and encourages them to take greater ownership and participate more directly in the policy development process. Continuing the dialogue throughout the policy development process further enhances this process.

Stepping Up to Mental health reform

- > 4 'panels' of consumer, professional and agency representatives used to consolidate information, distil advice and build consensus
- > Feedback loop used to test and refine ideas ensuring feasibility of recommendations
- > Ongoing engagement of consumers through the creation of the Mental Health Consumer Advisory Group to the Social Inclusion Board

Developing advice

Developing advice from the results of the scoping and active listening processes is the next stage in the Social Inclusion method and forms the basis for the action plan. It involves the steps of synthesis, identification of possible interventions, modelling, further research and re-engagement with stakeholders. The Social Inclusion Board then presents its advice to the Premier.

In the synthesis step, the Board draws on the full range of learnings from the social sciences and other academic disciplines, brings together the population profiles, place based issues, reviews of relevant literature and the diverse perspectives expressed through the active listening process. The information gained is then analysed through cross-referencing different sources of information against one another to determine overall direction. This allows for the testing of any contradictory stakeholder views, some of which may not always be relevant to the circumstances under consideration or supported by other evidence. As well, internationally recognised experts are invited to engage in this process to ensure that advice is consistent with international best practice.

While the Board draws heavily on theoretical frameworks to structure and support its analysis, it maintains an interest in arriving at practical and efficient policy applications. That is, theoretical rigour and pragmatic considerations are placed on a similar footing in this process of synthesis. The advice of the Social Inclusion Board also importantly outlines a framework for action, which includes a specific focus on prevention and early intervention strategies.

Constructing an action plan

Armed with a clear policy position, the next stage is to develop a specific action plan with a detailed timeframe and targets for immediate implementation with the agreement of Cabinet. At this stage the Board negotiates, prioritises and refines the actions required of specific agencies.

Agencies become active partners by sharing ownership of implementation; identifying agency specific responsibilities; defining reporting requirements; and finalising the detail of the action plan.

As partners, agencies gain a clear understanding of the fundamental logic of and the rationale for the Board's policy position. As well, agencies can examine their own policy and delivery mechanisms to assess how they align with the Social Inclusion Board's position.

To Break the Cycle: Re-thinking repeat offending

- > Dialogue with specific groups and communities about solutions
- > Detailed analysis of existing data and profiling of the issues
- > Building on expertise in innovative responses and good practice from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, (The City University of New York) and from the Family Justice Bodega Model, New York



Action agendas

- > Homelessness: a 14 Point Action Plan
- > Mental Health: a 5 Year Implementation Plan
- > *Making the Connections:* School Retention Action Plan

School Retention: Innovative Community Action Networks (ICANS)

- > 65 new models to support young people 'at risk' to remain engaged in learning were created and evaluated
- > Positive impact of participation evidenced by regularly collected destination data
- > Lessons learned from initial ICAN programs led to the development of Flexible Learning Options and refocusing of resources to meet the needs of individual students

Monitoring and evaluating implementation

The continuing role of the Social Inclusion Initiative is one of monitoring implementation for timeliness and fidelity to the Board's recommendations, as endorsed by Cabinet – a role led by the Commissioner for Social Inclusion and supported by the Social Inclusion Unit.

A dynamic part of the Social Inclusion method is the imperative to bring about change and results as quickly as possible. It is vital that there are clear, observable and easily understood targets attached to a timeframe and that these are regularly monitored at the highest level.

Evaluation is a 'walk-alongside' activity that occurs simultaneously with implementation, rather than as a post-implementation endeavour. It is as much about looking to future directions as it is in evaluating what has been done in the past. Evaluation is the responsibility of all involved. It needs to be built in from the planning stages and based on a culture of 'evaluative thinking'.

As part of the monitoring and evaluating role, the Commissioner makes regular visits to talk with the recipients of services, workers 'on the ground' and other service providers, which enables the collection of evidence direct from the field to inform the ongoing implementation and further policy and program development. ■





SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S SOCIAL INCLUSION METHOD DELIVERS RESULTS

Reduction in homelessness and rough sleeping

Implementation of the Social Inclusion Board's advice on homelessness has seen a 5% reduction in rough sleeping in South Australia between 2001 and 2006. This has been achieved against the national trend of a 19% increase in the number of people sleeping rough. In the inner city of Adelaide the most recent street count in August 2008 indicated a 45% reduction in rough sleeping since the first count in June 2007. South Australia continues to work towards achieving its Strategic Plan Target of halving rough sleeping across the State by 2010.



Re-thinking responses to repeat offending

Systems reform has been an integral part of the Social Inclusion Initiative. In 2007, the Commissioner for Social Inclusion investigated the issue of serious repeat offending by young people. His 46 recommendations in the *To Break the Cycle* report are being actioned. As well, lessons learned from the Board's *Breaking the Cycle* pilot program, also targeting repeat youth offending, are being embedded in agency operations as part of the broader youth justice system reform.

Whole-system reform of mental health

In some instances, recommending major systems reform has been necessary. The Board's 2007 *Stepping Up* report, which maps out a five year plan for reforming the South Australian mental health system, is an example. Funding of \$130m has been secured for the implementation of this major reform process to ensure that people suffering mental illness in this State receive the level of care they need whenever they need it. The Board is monitoring implementation to make certain the full package of reforms is delivered. The new stepped system of care will be well integrated and focused on the recovery needs of people.

Investment in Aboriginal health and education

The Social Inclusion Initiative has used innovative approaches to contribute to improving Aboriginal health and wellbeing by using sport, recreation and the arts. This has led to the establishment of the SA Aboriginal Sports Training Academy and the introduction of the *Spirit Festival*, South Australia's first Aboriginal festival of arts, culture and sport. From 2005 to 2008, 154 students have been enrolled at the SA Aboriginal Sports Training Academy at the campus in northern Adelaide, and 11 have now successfully completed their secondary schooling and others have obtained a vocational education qualification. Further campuses are being established across the State. The highly successful *Spirit Festival* was spread across two weekends in October and December 2008, and included a sporting component, featuring athletics, netball and Australian Rules football; and an arts and culture component, featuring traditional and contemporary music, dance, visual arts and food. The *Spirit Festival* will continue to be an annual event in South Australia.

Increase in school retention for young people at risk

The Social Inclusion Board's spotlight on finding better ways to keep young people engaged in school has contributed to taking South Australia's school retention rate to its highest level in 13 years, with 75.3% of State school students beginning high school in 2004 being retained to year 12 in 2008. The Innovative Community Action Networks, ICANs, a creation of the Social Inclusion Board, have successfully adopted an unambiguous 'whatever it takes' approach to prevent young people from dropping out of school early by empowering local communities to come up with local solutions.⁴ Although the majority of ICAN participants had histories of poor school attendance or they had completely disengaged from learning, following their ICAN involvement, nearly 80% of these young people were engaged in learning or earning pathways. ICAN schools are now trialing a new, more flexible way to support these young people through a Flexible Learning Option (FLO) enrolment. The FLO model sees funding follow the individual student, which will ensure the sustainability of this approach. ■



⁴ For further information about the ICANs refer to the publication on the Social Inclusion Initiative website: *Innovative Community Action Networks: an innovation of South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative*. February 2009. www.socialinclusion.sa.gov.au or the ICAN website www.ican.sa.edu.au



A NEW METHOD FOR OUR TIME

The lessons from the Social Inclusion Initiative in South Australia confirm that combining:

- > a particular set of principles and processes
- > independent advice embedded within government and the direct support of the Head of Government
- > a high profile advocate and champion for social inclusion
- > a preparedness to innovate and unwavering determination and
- > a joined-up government and community involved approach

leads to more effective public policy making that has a positive impact in the lives of the most marginalised citizens and builds a more socially inclusive community.

A further lesson is that persistence and evolution are essential. Achieving benefit for the most vulnerable people in our community requires upsetting the equilibrium of traditional systems. By focusing on the experiences of people using these systems, flaws and weaknesses in the system are revealed. The Social Inclusion Initiative then proposes realistic steps which can be implemented by government to reform policies, programs and systems.

Finally the sustainability of the Social Inclusion Initiative is only possible from the centre of government. Our mantra of “putting people and communities at the heart of systems and bureaucracy” ensures that this unique method based on joined-up work contributes to long-term systems change and to social policy and services which DO address the real needs of people, particularly people who are most disadvantaged in our society.

In the turbulent times of the 21st Century, governments around the world are dealing with major social and economic crises. There is great potential for social exclusion to escalate. How governments respond not only impacts on our lives now, but also determines the directions for future decades. New ways of working are needed; ways that are able to cut across and though existing barriers and structures in minimum timeframes; and that have the flexibility and authority to move quickly to address key policy issues to bring about real benefits for people and community. South Australia’s Social Inclusion Initiative is a method for our time. ■





Further information about South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative

Please visit the **Social Inclusion Initiative** website at:
www.socialinclusion.sa.gov.au

See also:

Cappo, D. (2008) *Six years On: A review of South Australia's Social inclusion Initiative: The Social inclusion Initiative Model – how it operates and why it works.* Address to the Don Dunstan Foundation, 21 April
www.dunstan.org.au/events/socialinclusionforum.html

Newman, L., Biedrzycki, K., Patterson, J. & Baum, F. (2007) *A Rapid Appraisal Case Study of South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative.* A report prepared for the Social Exclusion Knowledge Network of the World Health Organization's Commission on Social Determinants of Health.
www.socialinclusion.sa.gov.au/files/SEKN_SA_Case_Study_Final_Report.pdf

Cappo, D. (2005) Keynote speech given to the Institute of Public Administration Australia (SA Branch) Seminar *Reclaiming the Cutting Edge in Public Sector Management*, February
www.socialinclusion.sa.gov.au/files/speech_05feb_ippacutedge.pdf ■



