

**Submission
No 2**

INQUIRY INTO SERVICE COORDINATION IN COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH SOCIAL NEEDS

Organisation: Centacare South West NSW

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RE: Brief Response to the Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into service coordination in communities with high social needs.

The Standing Committee on Social Issues has invited submissions to an inquiry into service coordination in communities with high social needs.

Centacare South West NSW (CSWNSW) makes the following brief comments for the Committee's examination in response to the scope of the Inquiry.

- *the extent to which government and non-government service providers are identifying the needs of clients and providing a coordinated response which ensures access to services both within and outside of their particular area of responsibility*

Both at a regional and national level CSWNSW and other service providers have identified pockets and communities of high social needs and social disadvantage.

The Dropping off the Edge 2015 report <http://www.dote.org.au/> highlights the concentration of disadvantage in Australian communities and dominant factors within New South Wales where just 11 postcodes (1.8% of total) account for 21.4% of the most disadvantaged rank positions. The dominant factors in these postcodes include criminal convictions, unemployment, no internet access, domestic violence, lack of qualifications and young adults not fully engaged in work or study. For more information about the implications for the state of NSW visit the following hyperlink at <http://www.dote.org.au/nsw-web-of-disadvantage/>.

Experiences of disadvantage in Australia are not evenly distributed across the community: they are geographically concentrated, complex and persistent and rural, regional and remote are disproportionately represented. Complex and entrenched disadvantage is experienced by a small number of communities across Australia that has shown few signs of improvement in the past 15 years. This needs to be seen not as the failure of communities but the failure of policy. These communities are unfairly carrying the burden of disadvantage. Consequently, a new approach is needed, particularly in the 3% of communities that bear the greatest burden within each state and territory.

CSWNSW seeks to respond to this phenomena via the provision of Place Base Approaches (localised, co-ordinated, integrated, joined up responses) [http://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/Place based services literature review.pdf](http://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/Place_based_services_literature_review.pdf) to address 'wicked and entrenched problems'.

- *barriers to the effective coordination of services, including lack of client awareness of services and any legislative provisions such as privacy law.*

Apart from the barriers referenced above, CSWNSW experiences other barriers to deliver Place Based Approaches such as 'contractual restrictions in terms of the programs' catchment, age of clients etc., short term funding cycles, inadequate funding for rural, remote and regional Australia (although with greater co-ordination and integration we can make the dollar go further), organisational protection of turf, poor understanding of and application of community development practices, and policy driven by ideology rather than evidence.

- *consideration of initiatives such as the Dubbo Minister's Action Group and best practice models for the coordination of services.*

The above initiatives are worthy of consideration.

Rather than broad brush approaches, Governments of all persuasions and jurisdictions must also commence 'non stigmatising' conversations with the general Australian community (and these disadvantage communities in particular) about how to turn this around and take concerted action to provide equal and fair opportunities in life for residents of these disadvantaged communities. We are grateful for the opportunity to make this submission to the inquiry.

A way of managing decades of entrenched disadvantage, in partnership with the community bearing the burden of, is to act to put in place appropriate structures, plans and resources targeted to the communities in order to turn around this unjust situation. Without such action there is a significant risk that some of the country's most severely disadvantaged communities will continue to 'drop off the edge' and remain a high social needs area.

Another worthy initiative to address disadvantage is via 'The Collective' a tender recently submitted by NSW Family and Community Services.

The Collective aims to contribute to the NSW Government's NSW 2021 Goal 13 – "*protect the most vulnerable and break the cycle of disadvantage, and improve the health and wellbeing of communities*". The Collective has several aims which should be common to all approaches to engage entrenched disadvantage, including:

- reducing the prescriptive role played by Government in the development of local, tailored solutions to local challenges
- supporting the local community to lead in dealing with local social issues, strongly supported by business and other government entities
- linking stakeholders together so that they can interact independently of Government
- prioritising the leveraging of existing social capital in the community and developing a collective sense of social responsibility; and
- connecting with potential partners who have a desire to improve social outcomes and encourage them to take action through projects with The Collective.

The Collective allows organisations to attract new social investment from outside of government, build social capital and achieve a strong social return for investors. This has the potential to support the work of FACS to meet its objectives to deliver better services for vulnerable communities.

One, goal not contained in the Collective tender but aligned with the worthy goals of attracting new social investment is to change the funding mix and redirect some recurrent funding currently targeting more affluent communities towards a longer term (8-12 years with an exit clause) more outcomes based funding mix towards the provision of Place Based approaches with the above disadvantaged communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make these brief comments for this submission. I'd be glad to answer any further questions the inquiry might have that would be helpful to them in their deliberations.