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Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Social Inclusion

INDIGENOUS SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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Contents

INDIGENOUS SOCIAL INCLUSION/EXCLUSION

Social profile

Part of the picture of social exclusion of a group can be conveyed by a statistical profile. While not revealing the whole story such a profile in the case of Australia's Indigenous population certainly confirms that they are excluded from a range of life opportunities, experiences and tangible amenities generally regarded by a majority of their fellow citizens as essential parts of life.

Few life opportunities are more basic than life expectancy itself. Notwithstanding some significant health gains made by Indigenous peoples in the 1970s and 1980s, health inequality with the non-Indigenous population appears to have remained static or continued to grow across a number of indicators (HREOC, 2006)[1]. The rate of low birth weigh babies born to Aboriginal mothers is twice that of the rest of the population; where reliable data is available the infant death rate is of the same comparative order while in the Northern Territory the Indigenous infant mortality rate was three—four times the national rate in 2004 (ABS, 2004).[2] The rates of chronic and communicable diseases are much higher than for non-Aboriginal women and men and the life expectation of Aboriginal women and men is approximately 18 years less than for their counterparts in the general population, with rates inferior to those of Indigenous peoples in Canada, New Zealand and America. Even after allowing for the technical difficulties involved the rates of disability generally, and mental health in particular, disability rates are elevated above those of the general population. Exposure to violence and injury is greater in the Aboriginal population.

Income, employment

The evidence of social surveys in 2002 indicated that the average (equivalised) household income for Indigenous persons was $387 per week, 59% of the relevant income level for non-Indigenous persons ($665 per week). In the age group 15-64 years, 54% of Indigenous people are in the labour force* compared with 73% of the non-Indigenous population[3]. Hunter (2000)[4] believes the effects of unemployment are particularly pronounced if its social, psychological, and economic impacts are concentrated among long-term unemployed and if its effects spill over onto other family or community members. This is a set of circumstances that he believes to be true of many Indigenous households. His analysis of survey data leads him to conclude that long-term unemployed Indigenous people experience social exclusion in the form of high rates of arrests and police harassment; low levels of social capital and civic engagement; and high levels of drinking-related offences. The adverse effects of unemployment impact upon the lives of co-residents but the social exclusion of the Indigenous unemployed from mainstream society does not necessarily imply a general lack of social networks. An important point made by Hunter is that a sense of fatalism cultivated by sustained unemployment can be an impediment to the effectiveness of policies intended to lessen the effect of being unemployed.

1   Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, (2006) A Statistical Overview of Aboriginal and Torres strait Islanders Peoples in Australia, Sydney, HREOC, August

*   Meaning that they were engaged in mainstream employment, participating in CDEP or unemployed

2   Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2005) *Deaths 2004*, ABS cat. no.3320.0. Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia, p69.

3   Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2001) *Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 2001*, ABS cat. no. 4713.0, Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia,

4   Hunter, B., (2000) "Social exclusion, social capital, and Indigenous Australians. Measuring the social cost of unemployment, Canberra, Australian National University, Demetrius, the Institutional Repository of the ANU— http://dspace.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/41388

This interpretation resonates with certain of my own research findings with general population studies, such as a statistically significant higher degree of fatalism in multiply-disadvantaged suburbs of Newcastle[5]. In another study, strong social networks did little to curb problematic child rearing when the closely-linked households shared similar outlooks[6].

Criminal justice

Aboriginal people are grossly over-represented within Australia's prisons. In June, 2005, Indigenous people represented 22% of those in prison in Australia[7]. As at December 2005 the highest age standardised ratio of imprisonment for Indigenous persons was recorded in Western Australia and South Australia with Indigenous people being 19 and 13 times more likely than non-Indigenous people to be in prison. Tasmania had the lowest age standardised ratio of all states and territories with Indigenous people four times more likely to go to prison than non-Indigenous people. The ABS estimated that in 2002/03 Indigenous young people were detained at ten times the rate of all young people in Australia[8].

Housing

In 2001 the ABS found that Aboriginal people were much more likely than the general population to be living in a rented home (63.5% compared with 26.6%) than one that they owned or were purchasing. This is an issue of considerable importance to the social inclusion of Indigenous Australians. In general, home ownership brings a sense of social inclusion. Research indicates that the purchase of a home contributes to social wellbeing and enhances the dignity of those concerned, their empowerment and their confidence about the future (Shew and Stelzer, 2004)[9]. Of course, cause and effect are sometimes difficult to distinguish in a field where inner states and external actions can mutually reinforce one another. However, my own research on factors associated with community social cohesion in Victoria has shown that such cohesiveness, with attendant social benefits, is associated with the purchasing of a home. This as yet unpublished finding matches that of Shew and Stelzer in the US that home owners are more likely to participate in local community organisations, work together to solve local problems, and see their children stay at school for longer. Protection and preservation of the home asset is increased when the owner controls the selection and purchase decision.

These benefits are less available to Indigenous Australians than their white compatriots. ANZ sponsored research (Chant Link, 2004)[10] indicates that Indigenous Australians are the most financially excluded group in Australia. Overall, 71% of all Australians have some degree of home ownership but Indigenous participation in home ownership is 28% (ABS, 2002)[11]. This latter figure is low compared with the rate of home ownership among other Indigenous groups in industrially developed countries. In recent times the Federal Government has expanded two programs in response to this issue. With respect to the IEA homes program, the overall loans performance has been sound but there is a substantial waiting list of potential customers due to the lack of available capital to meet the demand.[12]

5   Vinson, T., Homel, R., Bonney, R., (1975) "A Community Study: Newcastle," Community Services: Four Studies, Canberra, *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty*

6   Vinson, T., Ba ldry, E., Hargreaves, J., (1996) "Neighbourhoods, Networks and Child Abuse", *The British Journal of Social Work*, N026: 523-543

7   Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2005) *Prisoners in Australia 2005*, ABS cat. no. 4517.0, Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia

8   Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Heath and Welfare, *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, p217.

9   Shew, W. & Stelzer, I., 2004, External Benefits of Home Ownership, Hudson Institute, http://www.hreoc.gov.au/Social_Justice/statistics/index.html

10   Chant Link, 2004, A Report on Financial Exclusion in Australia www.anz.com/aus/values/commdevFinance/research.asp

11   Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey

12   ANZ, (2000) Home Ownership and Indigenous Australians, Discussion Paper, Melbourne, ANZ, July

Given the relevance of housing densities to health and general wellbeing the recent emergence of a comprehensive Indigenous Housing Needs Measurement Model is to be welcomed. ABS Census data, the Community Housing Infrastructure Needs Surveys (CHINS) and environmental health surveys, have all contributed to a greater understanding and calculation of Indigenous housing need. Certain comparatively minor modifications are being made but the basic formula for calculating the bedroom needs of an Indigenous community is:

	DIMENSION	HOW COUNTED
A	Population	Number of people counted in community
B	Bedrooms	Number of bedrooms in community
C	New bedrooms needed	A÷1.8—B
D	Replace improvised bedrooms	Number of improvised bedrooms in community
E	Replace bedrooms in poor condition	Number of bedrooms in community needing to be replaced
F	Bedrooms needing renovation	Number of bedrooms in community needing major repair or renovation
G	TOTAL BEDROOMS NEED	C+D+E+F

Education

In the present series of commissioned papers a constant theme has been the underlying influence of education in shaping the various forms of disadvantage outlined above and the social and economic benefits to be derived from targeted investments in 'human capital.' In 2002, a comparison of the highest level of schooling completed by non-Indigenous and indigenous people showed that 15.4% of the former and 33.4% of the latter had completed Year 9 or below. An official Review of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales (2004)[13] reported that Aboriginal students continue to be the most educationally disadvantaged student group in Australia, with consistently lower levels of academic achievement and higher rates of absenteeism and suspensions than among non-Aboriginal students. This failure to achieve was ascribed to social, cultural, environmental, economic and health factors. The Inquiry believed Investments in education for Aboriginal people were particularly important because they impact directly or indirectly on key areas of disadvantage: unemployment, incomes, health and crime.

Evidence from Australia (MCEETYA, 2001) indicates that completing Year 10 or 11 increases an Aboriginal person's chance of employment by 40 percent. Completing Year 12 increases employment prospects by a further 13 percent. .Improvements in education reduce the risk of poverty and its associated negative impacts on health, social status and crime. This effect flows on into labour market performance and completed years of schooling is a predictor of health— it is more important in this respect than occupation or income.[14] There is agreement in the literature that poor health hinders many Aboriginal children's school attendance and restricts their ability to learn. Two health issues in particular have been identified as having the most detrimental effect on the education of Aboriginal children. These are otitis media (inflammation or infection of the middle ear) and poor nutrition.

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13   The Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education Yanigurra Muya: Ganggurrinyma Yaarri; Guurulaw Yirringin gurray, (2004) , Sydney, NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group/ NSW Department of Education and Training, August

14   Vinson, T., Esson, K., Johnson, K., (2002) The Independent Inquiry into NSW Public Education—the Vinson Inquiry, Sydney, Pluto Press

There are also important links between education and Aboriginal social inclusion. The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has presented general evidence of a significant negative association between young people's continued participation in high school and their involvement in unemployment and crime while the Australian Institute of Criminology researchers have shown the particular application of that connection to Aboriginal young people. Bureau researchers Chapman, Weatherburn, Kapuscinski, Chilvers and Roussel (2002)[15] have reported that:

> Elimination of long term unemployment amongst males aged 15–24 by direct job creation would result in close to a 7 per cent reduction in property crime in NSW per annum. Better still, if these individuals continued in formal education to the end of senior high school (increasing school retention by an extra 7000 individuals) the reduction in break, enter and steal over the course of a year would amount to almost 15 per cent. The results highlight the potential societal benefits in terms of crime reduction that might follow from the institution of policies that are effective in the reduction of long-term unemployment and promote young people's educational success.

Australian Institute of Criminology researchers Walker and McDonald (1995)[16] have found that non-Indigenous people who have not completed secondary school are ten times more likely to be in prison than their more educated peers. However, Indigenous people, even when they have completed secondary school, have ten times the chance of being in prison compared to non-Indigenous people who completed school, and are roughly on a par with the non-Indigenous early school leavers.

Strategic analysis and program logic

A veritable litany of exclusory circumstances and pressures has been invoked to describe the position of Australian Aborigines within Australia. The literature presents a very wide range of implicated factors and an equally diverse range of possible partial remedies to the manifold and frequently linked impediments to social inclusion. It is insightful to identify an over-arching theme in Aboriginal social exclusion, such as the cumulative effects of colonisation (Malin, 2002)[17]. However, when it comes to strategic responses policy formulators need to derive some type of higher order understanding of the dynamics that underlie the reported problems. Otherwise there is a danger of investing in a piecemeal array of 'remedies' that lack any degree of reinforcement of one another.

More than a decade ago concern was being expressed about the proliferation, fragmentation and inefficiency of Aboriginal programs (Dixon and Scheurell, 1995)18. It was argued that interventions needed to be co-ordinated and integrated if they were to be effective. Otherwise, fragmentation may advantage some individuals and organisations able to manoeuvre their way through an array of programs but the current lack of program coherence may be intimidating and confusing to others in great need but lacking such ability.

15   Chapman, B., Weatherburn, D., Kapuscinski, C., Chilvers, M, and Roussel , S (2002) "Unemployment duration, schooling and property crime," Contemporary Issues in Crime and Justice, No. 74, Sydney, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
16   Walker, J., McDonald, D., (1995) "The over-representation of Indigenous people in custody in Australia, Canberra, Institute of Criminology.
17   Malin, M., "Is schooling good for Indigenous children's health?" Association for active Educational Researchers, http://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/mal02185.htm
18   Dixon, J., Scheurell, R., (1995) *Social Welfare with Indigenous Peoples*, Routledge

In addition to questions of equity, there is the challenge of making effective choices from among the vast array of theories and potential remedies on offer. This dilemma long ago attracted professional attention and then lapsed only to recently see a resurgence of interest. Fifty years ago Lippitt, Watson and Westley (1958) [19] undertook a project aimed at identifying the underlying logic and common conceptual links between the ways change agents defined problems existing in individuals, groups, organisations and communities and how the agents based their responses or change strategies on those understandings. The important lesson from Lippitt and colleagues' work was the feasibility of compressing a diverse range of ways in which psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, community workers, business consultants and other professionals working in the field of assisting system change located problems within three broad 'diagnostic orientations'* and designed remedial interventions based on their chosen diagnostic stance.

The researchers found that the agents' change endeavours were commonly grounded in strategic conceptions of the most effective sequence of steps to be taken towards the final change goal. The choice of a "leverage point" was influenced by considerations of the accessibility and salience (in terms of 'run on' effects) of different parts of a system. Lippitt et al refer to the latter characteristic as linkage: "There must be at least a possible line of change progress from the leverage point to the change objective. The ideal linkage is one which permits a direct, rapid, and easy spread of change from the leverage point to the change objective" (p. 102).

This general notion of program logic has been given a contemporary revival by Baehler (2007) who sees it as focusing on assumptions and propositions that lead from a policy, program or service idea to a policy goal. The logic of a government intervention needs to be understood in terms of a 'theory-of-action'—"a set of assumptions and inferences about cause-and-effect that add up to a theory of 'how to produce a desired result.'[20] She says that this process need not necessarily involve fanciful language or abstruse theory. There are some striking similarities between the 'contemporary' exposition of this approach and what Lippitt and colleagues had to say fifty years ago. For example, Baehler says a policy's intended theory-of-action takes the form of a sequence or chain of outcomes in which "each stage…represents both an end (i.e. the outcome of the previous link's success) and a means (i.e., a prerequisite for reaching the next link)."

Underlying all of the potential linkages are assumptions concerning the suitability of the means for remedying or improving the situation and in Baehler's view (and Lippitt et al's earlier reasoning) it is important to expose what the policy is taking for granted. This takes us into the realm of causal theory and the basis for believing that a particular set of outputs will generate a particular set of outcomes. Not that the latter is typically clearly stated for it is often easier to argue the merits of a range of activities than the merits of strategic goals served by those activities.

I have been privileged to review the Blue Sky ideas document and, on a confidential basis, share in the thinking of relevant officers as they attempt to come to grips with the policy challenges of current gaps in the Aboriginal community's participation in education and employment. One could only but be impressed by the commitment that lies behind the profusion of policy possibilities on the table and the inherent value of many of the separate interventions under contemplation. The emphasis placed on appropriate teacher education, involvement of industry, strengthening the role of Aboriginal people in the education workforce, curriculum awareness,

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19 Lippitt, R., Watson, J., Westley, B., (1958) *The Dynamics of Planned Change*, New York, Harcourt, Brace

*   Internal distribution of power, internal mobilisation of energy, and internal communication.

20 Baehler, K., (2007) "Intervention Logic/Program Logic: Toward Good Practice," Wellington, School of Government, Victoria University in J. Wanna, editor, Improving Implementation: Organisational Change and Project Management. Canberra: Australian National University E Press.

and the use of incentives to support policy are among many insightful proposals in the document. Especially important are proposals for increasing parental participation in education.

It would not seem profitable for someone in my position to simply suggest additions to the already abundant and potentially beneficent array of proposed interventions. Yet one is obliged to ask, 'How do all these pieces fit together to achieve policy objectives?' As the Blue Sky document acknowledges (p. 8), despite the setting of targets and constructive conversations with education providers around strategic directions, "only modest improvements to Indigenous education outcomes have been secured."

This leads me to the view that, notwithstanding the frequent references to strategic thinking in the document, it is the absence of an overarching strategy or strategies that represents the major unfinished business of the envisaged suite of interventions. This comment is intended to emphasise the value of a framework that would help to determine the place, scale and relative efficacy of individual components of intended actions within an overall plan of interventions that converge on policy goals. Pragmatically, it would help to sort the timing and scale of, say, an investment in a program supporting the teaching of English as a second language to Indigenous children in remote areas, compared with other possibilities.

Partly because of a clearer focus but also because it builds upon the outcomes of (hopefully) successful education policies, the section of Blue Sky dealing with "Halving the Employment Gap" builds the linkages between outputs and outcomes in a somewhat more explicit way. Moreover the connections between different aspects of policy are intended to achieve the objective stated at the outset of avoiding actions which are "incremental and piecemeal." Nevertheless there is a tendency to glide over the barriers that typically beset whole-of-government projects. An important issue is: 'How can we make the written-down undertakings to collaborate actually work? Still, to a commendable degree, the plan gets down to the detail of what would need to happen to achieve success, particularly the contributions that need to be made by other government agencies.

Are there any local precedents for guiding the kind of fine-grained analysis of the logic of proposed interventions in the two specified areas and, for that matter, other DEEWR policy areas? This type of analytical approach to formulating social strategies was recently reflected in the (then) Department of Families and Community Services' development of a "program logic model for supporting parenting capacity (FaCS, 2004)[21]. Among the characteristics of this approach the Department included:

- Development of over-arching objective/s that articulate the desired results

- Articulation of motivating conditions and causes—the factors, issues and problems that funding programs are trying to improve or eliminate

- Identification of program strategies and interventions that have been demonstrated to provide the service approaches that can most effectively address the issues identified

- Development of common performance measures that will be used to assess progress, and

- Articulation of indicators of the program's desired results that reflect substantial changes in people, policies or systems across a whole community (the combined effect of many related programs).

I believe that something similar would enhance the impact of DEEWR's work in advancing the educational and employment progress of Aboriginal people.

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21 FaCS, (2004) "Developing a program logic model for supporting parenting capacity,"
    http://www.facsia.gov.au/family/goodbeginnings/vol1/EIP5.1.html#5.1.3