![Brotherhood of St Laurence logo — Working for an Australia free of poverty]

What next for place-based initiatives to tackle disadvantage?

A practical look at recent lessons for Australian public policy

Brotherhood of St Laurence

August 2015

About the Brotherhood of St Laurence

Established in the 1930s, the Brotherhood is an independent, non-government organisation with strong community links that works to build social and economic participation. Based in Melbourne, but with a national profile, the Brotherhood continues to work for an Australia free of poverty and social exclusion. Through a combination of innovative direct service delivery and research, we aim to bring a fresh perspective to issues of poverty and disadvantage.

Note: an earlier version of this paper was circulated in April 2015

Introduction

This paper provides a brief overview of the practical learnings from recent place-based initiatives in Australia to tackle socioeconomic disadvantage. It pulls together the findings of topical reports, evaluations of place-based initiatives and insights gleaned from interviews we have conducted with key people involved in some of these initiatives. The paper is a thought starter about how our public policy environment can foster the next generation of place-based approaches.

Australia's concentration of postcode disadvantage

While Australia is a wealthy country, it has places of deep and persistent disadvantage that profoundly affect the life chances and the wellbeing of the people living there. High concentrations of poverty and social exclusion are present in many remote and some rural communities, and in certain regional and metropolitan urban areas. And there are clear warning signs that the growth corridors of our major cities—with their rapid population growth and comparatively poor social capital, civic connections, transport and employment opportunities—are at risk of entrenched disadvantage.

The *Dropping off the edge 2015* report reveals the high levels of disadvantage being experienced in particular locations. In Victoria for example, 11 postcodes account for more than nine times their share of the worst rankings on indicators causing poverty and disadvantage; and 44 postcodes have a five-fold overrepresentation. Nearly all of these postcodes have remained depressed for long periods, revealing their entrenched disadvantage. The authors explain that:

> High levels of unemployment, low levels of income and education, housing stress, high incidence of family violence and criminal offending are consistently present in these communities. These factors coalesce to form a web of disadvantage severely limiting life opportunities over generations and accruing significant social and economic costs to the broader community.[1]

Despite the geographic concentration of disadvantage, the 'opportunity-stunting' consequences are being felt across the nation.

The case for place-based approaches

Tackling Australia's increasing concentration of entrenched disadvantage must be a central plank in any inclusive growth or social justice agenda.

Locational disadvantage cannot be (and has not been) reversed by blunt national or state-wide policy instruments and centrally designed services that are blind to the impact of place on a person's opportunities and aspirations. Untangling the web of disadvantage requires tailored, place-based interventions capable of addressing interrelated causes of local disadvantage that sit side by side with broader system-level reforms.

It is the Brotherhood's view that bringing civil society together with business and government to jointly tackle local challenges can deliver sustained change. Indeed, there are already some

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[1] T Vinson and M Rawsthorne, *Dropping off the edge 2015: persistent communal disadvantage in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, Richmond, Vic., 2015.

promising instances. Such an approach offers an irreplaceable opportunity to harness local insights, skills and resources to improve the effectiveness of government programs, polices and investment.

There is a growing consensus that Australia will not be able to make significant progress in addressing entrenched disadvantage, or preventing its emergence, unless the affected local communities are deeply invested in place-based solutions:

- In 2007, the Australian Public Service Commission pointed out that 'wicked problems' go beyond the capacity of any one organisation to respond to, necessitate engaging citizens and stakeholders in policy making and implementation and require innovative solutions that can be modified in the light of on-the-ground experience.[2]
- In 2011, the Australian Social Inclusion Board advised that 'turning around the most severe and entrenched disadvantage must start with allowing the affected communities to be part of the process. Appropriate support will still need to be offered by governments, but key decisions, about what the problems are, and how they can best be solved, need to be led by the community'.[3]
- The evaluation of Victoria's Neighbourhood Renewal program reported that the initiative helped narrow the gap between outcomes in areas with high concentrations of public housing residents and in other areas. It found that the methodology of place-based renewal works, and observed that creating a local point of connection for residents, policy makers and service providers 'increases the relevance and effectiveness of new initiatives and existing services' and 'creates a connection between top-down resource allocation and bottom-up decision-making, resulting in better use of resources and better outcomes'.[4]
- Developed by leaders from Aboriginal communities in eight regions across Australia, Empowered Communities: Empowered Peoples[5] was presented to the Australian Government early in 2015 as a framework to underpin a 10-year Indigenous Empowerment strategy. It charts a new way for governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and corporate Australia to work together. Empowered Communities calls for governments to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations to take ownership of creating change. It eschews government policies driven from the centres of power and instead points to the need for policies and programs that address local priorities and enable local solutions.
- The *Dropping off the edge 2015* report also calls for a new approach to reduce the most severe disadvantage. It identifies the need for a 'multi-layered, cooperative and coordinated strategy that is owned and driven by the community'.[6]

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[2]Australian Public Service Commission, *Tackling wicked problems*, Australian Government, Canberra, 2007.
[3]Australian Social Inclusion Board, *Governance models for location based initiatives*, Australian Government, Canberra, 2011.
[4]*Neighbourhood Renewal: evaluation report 2008*, Department of Human Services, Victoria.
[5] *Empowered communities: empowered peoples – design report* 2015, 20<http://www.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/EC%20Report.pdf>
[6] T Vinson and M Rawsthorne, *Dropping off the edge 2015: persistent communal disadvantage in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, Richmond, Vic., 2015.

Australia's recent experience of place-based approaches

Place-based initiatives focus on bringing about change in a geographical area. Common attributes of place-based work include a local governance mechanism to bring different voices together and make decisions, development of a shared approach, coordination of efforts, targeted investment and the tailoring of program, services and policies to advance local aspirations. At their best, place-based initiatives build on the assets and strengths of a local community, involve all interested groups from local residents to government departments and are structured to build the capacity of the community to contribute to local solutions.

A range of place-based initiatives have been trialled by Australian governments over the last 40 years; these represent an aberration from the norm of a centralised approach to policy making, planning service delivery and income support payments. Some initiatives have principally involved local coordination of government agencies and service providers; others have involved a broader range of stakeholders including employers, residents, local groups, developers and multiple levels of government. Some place-based initiatives have been focused on small areas with a couple of hundred residents; others have stretched across whole municipalities. There have been place-based initiatives focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. There is a growing body of location-based initiatives to improve the wellbeing of children[7], reflecting the universal aspirations of communities experiencing disadvantage to build a better future for their children. More recently, community-generated place-based models have emerged, some of them using a Collective Impact framework; while governments may be critical participants in these, they have not established them.

We have looked at a number of recent Australian place-based initiatives to inform this paper. Five are presented as case studies in the Appendix: Better Future Local Solutions, Communities for Children, Neighbourhood Renewal (Vic.), Go Goldfields (Vic.) and Glenorchy Child (Tas.).

From these, our major observations of relevance to public policy include:

- The Commonwealth Government does not have a public policy framework or a consistent approach to support and enable place-based initiatives. Place-based approaches are at the margins of public policy.
- State and Commonwealth governments are critical enablers of place-based work, but need not control or run initiatives. Place-based initiatives are generally more sustainable when they are led by community or by local government.
- Place-based initiatives established by state and Commonwealth governments rarely include coordination between governments at the level of design. Each level of government has tended to do its own thing, leaving the others to respond. The opportunity for an alignment of efforts is not being realised.
- There is significant tension between implementation of localised solutions and the organisation of government departments, program structures and government funding and service agreements.
- Place-based initiatives require a pool of funds that can be flexibly applied, but this does not necessitate the investment of substantial additional public funds.

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[7] B Laidlaw, M Fong, R Fry & S West, *A snapshot of place-based activity promoting children's wellbeing*, Murdoch Children's Research Institute and Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Child Health, Parkville, Vic., 2014.

- Initiatives that include people with 'lived experience' of the issues being addressed and local employers in decision-making appear to generate stronger results than those that principally involve services and government agencies.
- Initiatives seem to fare better when built on universal platforms such as child and maternal health services, schools and Centrelink.
- While there have been some promising outcomes, place-based initiatives have typically been short-lived and small-scale, and have not been significant enough to alter the economic and social foundations of a community.
- The evidence base of what works and how it works is patchy. The published evaluations vary in quality. Where place-based initiatives have clear and measurable intended outcomes, underpinned by the collection and analysis of relevant data, it is easier to track whether they are making a tangible difference to people's lives.

A public policy environment that supports place-based approaches

There is much to learn from experiences to date, both in Australia and internationally, in order to develop a public policy environment that enables community-led solutions to address entrenched disadvantage.

Section 2 below highlights key recommendations from recent major reports that identify good practice in place-based interventions. Section 3 draws out ten key themes from these reports and marries them with recent practical examples in order to explore how Australian governments can effectively support place-based initiatives. It illustrates that while there are some promising examples of Australian governments experimenting with different ways of working to support place-based initiatives, there is still a long way to go.

Building a conducive public policy approach requires:

1. A combination of targeted local economic and social policy measures with a scale of investment that is capable of making a difference.
2. A willingness to be part of collaborative governance arrangements, together with the appropriate devolution of power and decentralisation of decision-making that allow significant and meaningful local involvement in determining the issues and solutions.
3. Translation of data for community-level use.
4. Flexible policy and program responses that allow different places to do different things and empower communities to play to their strengths.
5. Rethinking the way government funding is provided to foster local collaborations and innovation.
6. Alignment of efforts and resources between different parts and levels of government.
7. A focus on tracking and assessing outcomes, research and evaluation.
8. A long-term commitment of 10–20 years.
9. Supporting trials of Collective Impact approaches.
10. Building on existing networks and infrastructure rather than establishing new platforms for place-based initiatives.

Good practice in place-based interventions

Significant work has been done in Australia over the last three or four years to identify good practices in place-based interventions.

The Australian Social Inclusion Board's recommendations on governance for location-based initiatives

The Social Inclusion Board was established by the Rudd government in 2008 to advise it on advancing the social inclusion agenda. It undertook major policy work that culminated in a report published in 2011 on governance models that work best for locational approaches to disadvantage.[8]

The Board made the following recommendations for location-based initiatives in areas with populations of up to 5,000, but acknowledged that they may also have relevance for larger scale initiatives.

The Australian Social Inclusion Board recommended:

1. An approach to working in locations of greatest disadvantage should be founded on an understanding of the economic situation in priority locations, including:
   - mapping the local community's economic capacity;
   - involving major local employers and educational providers (or their representatives) in the governance of initiatives; and
   - local alignment between social and economic policies and programs.

2. The Commonwealth Government should seek agreement with state, territory and relevant local governments on:
   - a shared list of priority locations and a method for identifying such locations;
   - brokerage arrangements coordinating efforts of all levels of government, including nominating and empowering a single public servant to be responsible for leading the efforts of all levels of government; and
   - a shared agreement to commit for the long term.

3. Local governance structures in priority locations should include:
   - a mechanism for coordinating services provided by all levels of government, the non-profit and business sectors; and
   - a community governance mechanism which is capable of representing the community and driving local engagement.

4. The Australian Government should seek to include these features in future place-based initiatives:
   - explicit permission and adequate resourcing and time for public servants to develop a local governance mechanism;
   - public servants based locally with the authority to broker local solutions;
   - an explicit commitment to building local capacity and gradually devolving responsibility to local institutions;
   - a commitment to long-term funding arrangements;
   - a commitment to allowing flexible funding and accountability mechanisms; and
   - over the longer term, a commitment to seek agreement between Commonwealth, states, territories and relevant local governments to establish a shared resource allocation framework.

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[8]Australian Social Inclusion Board, op. cit.

5. Initiatives should focus on building local capacity, with a program built around three key capabilities:
  ➢ economic and human capital capacity;
  ➢ physical infrastructure; and
  ➢ social capital, including leadership and governance capacity.

6. Government capacity should be developed:
  ➢ to grant public servants permission, opportunity and support to use innovative funding and accountability approaches and to devolve responsibility where appropriate; and
  ➢ to follow the recommendations of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services, building the specific skills needed for public servants to work in locations.

7. The Commonwealth Government should engage states and territories immediately to begin work on processes described above.

Commonwealth Place-Based Service Delivery: Key Learnings Project

Common elements of what works in place-based initiatives were identified in a recent report prepared by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.[9] It provides a useful framework, informed by local and international evidence, about what good practice looks like in place-based interventions.

Common elements of best practice place-based initiatives identified in the Commonwealth Key Learnings Project are:

  ➢ flexible delivery – a flexible approach to service delivery according to community needs, as well as a flexible approach to funding;
  ➢ local autonomy – involving the local community (organisations and individuals) through consultation and active involvement in decisions;
  ➢ joined-up working – integrating or coordinating and developing partnerships between organisations within local areas across the government, private and community sector;
  ➢ governance – government agencies have good checks and balances in place regarding community discretion in the allocation of government resources;
  ➢ capacity development – sharing training or mentoring opportunities to build the core skills required to deliver services in different ways or to change service delivery methods;
  ➢ lead times – ensuring adequate time is available to set up programs, build relationships with communities, , build capacity within service delivery organisations;
  ➢ evaluation – that is capable of measuring causality, attribution, is based on a sound theory of change, accounts for population flows into and out of the area and analyses cost effectiveness.

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[9] S Wilks, J Lahausse & B Edwards, *Commonwealth Place-Based Service Delivery Initiatives: Key Learnings Project,* report prepared by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, 2014.

What works in place-based approaches to support children's wellbeing – Murdoch Children's Research Institute

The Murdoch Children's Research Institute recently concluded major research to understand how to better promote children's wellbeing through place-based initiatives.[10] Based on the available evidence of what works, it recommended that place-based initiatives to support children's wellbeing should incorporate as many of the following elements as possible.[11]

According to the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, the evidence of what works in place-based initiatives to support children's wellbeing includes:

Establishing a collaborative community-based partnership as the basis for action planning and implementation, with the following characteristics:

- ➢ a shared sense of urgency for change
- ➢ a shared agenda and coherent long-term vision
- ➢ a community-based collaborative partnership with clear governance structure and responsibilities
- ➢ engagement of a wide range of stakeholders
- ➢ influential champions and strong leadership
- ➢ sufficient time for strong personal relationships and trust to develop between partners
- ➢ sufficient funding and dedicated staff support from a 'backbone' organisation
- ➢ interventions and resources that are aligned towards common goals
- ➢ shared measurement systems
- ➢ continuous communication between stakeholders.

Developing and implementing a plan of action in order to improve outcomes for children and families, containing the following features:

- ➢ an ecological multilevel approach to address the conditions under which families are raising young children. Rather than relying upon single level interventions, it is important to intervene at multiple levels concurrently;
- ➢ ensuring that all families have positive personal support networks, regular opportunities to interact with other parents and young children, easy access to family-friendly settings and services, and urban environments that are easy to navigate and that provide lots of opportunities for encounters between people in the community;
- ➢ integrated service systems based on progressive universalism. An ideal service system would be one that is based on a strong and inclusive universal set of services, has well-developed 'horizontal' linkages between the various forms of services that directly or indirectly support families of young children, and also has well-developed 'vertical' linkages with secondary and tertiary services that enable varying levels of additional support to be provided to those with particular needs;
- ➢ good communication between communities and services. More effective communication will ensure that service providers and service systems can be more attuned to the emerging concerns of parents and more responsive to the emerging needs of communities;
- ➢ flexible and continuous learning. Since we cannot be sure of the outcomes of our interventions beforehand, we need to establish cycles of continuous improvement for maximum effectiveness;
- ➢ developmental evaluation and realistic evaluation methodologies. Given the open and

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[10] Four key reports can be downloaded from <www.rch.org.au>.
[11] TG Moore, H McHugh-Dillon, K Bull, R Fry, B Laidlaw & S West, *The evidence: what we know about place-based approaches to support children's wellbeing,* Murdoch Children's Research Institute and Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Health, Parkville, Vic., 2014.

> constantly evolving nature of place-based efforts to address wicked problems, the most appropriate forms of evaluation are developmental evaluation;
> ➢ service users are involved in co-production and co-design of services. Co-design and co-production approaches are based on the understanding that people's needs are better met when they are involved in an equal and reciprocal relationship with public service professionals and others;
> ➢ local competency-building. Interventions should be designed in ways that build on community strengths and seek to make communities stronger;
> ➢ interventions that are adapted to local circumstances and needs. A feature of effective place-based initiatives is that interventions are adapted to local circumstances and needs;
> ➢ evidence-based interventions. When an agreement is reached that one of the actions that is needed is a specific program to address a particular need (e.g. a parenting program), then the options to be considered should be evidence-based;
> ➢ time for outcomes to improve. Inter-agency working takes time to become established and it is not realistic to expect early evidence of a measurable impact on outcomes for children and their families.

Emerging themes for public policy

Some common themes from recent Australian experience and from the major reports profiled above provide important signposts to assist the development of a public policy environment that will support the next generation of place-based initiatives. This section looks at these in practice.

1. A combination of targeted local economic and social policy measures with a scale of investment that is capable of making a difference

A repeated message has been that local economic development needs to be a major focus alongside social considerations. In locations with entrenched disadvantage there needs to be a way for people to find their way into training and work, to break the cycle of deprivation and effect lasting change. This requires investment in both supply and demand-side strategies to enable communities to increase their economic prosperity, employers to tap the local labour market and residents to increase their social and economic participation. Local employers, chambers of commerce, schools and training providers need to be around the table. Economic and social policy instruments (education and training, employment, tax and transfers, industry, social services, transport and planning) need to be effectively utilised to complement local efforts.[12]

- One of the action areas of Victoria's **Neighbourhood Renewal** was increasing employment, learning opportunities and economic participation. A local employment and learning strategy was developed by a work and learning group in each area, underpinned by engagement with local employers, business representatives, local councils and regional development agencies. Coordinated investment in workforce participation and intermediate labour market programs, the use of social procurement and the establishment of community enterprises helped to create 5000 jobs and contributed to a 4% reduction in unemployment in the target population. However, the evaluation found that the initiative needed to be

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[12]P Smyth, *Place based policy at the crossroads: a summary report of the social inclusion and place based disadvantage workshop*, presentation to the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Department of Planning and Community Development Social Inclusion and Place Based Disadvantage Workshop Proceedings, Fitzroy, Vic., August 2008.

scaled up and that much more needed to be done to systemically turn around the deep exclusion prevalent in the targeted communities. Much stronger investment in the critical areas of the early years, educational engagement, employment and training was required.

- **Melbourne's North Innovation and Investment Fund (MNIIF)** has been established in response to the upcoming closure of Ford Australia's vehicle and engine manufacturing operations, which will greatly impact regions including Melbourne's northern suburbs around Broadmeadows. The $24.5 million MNIIF is funded jointly over three years by the Australian Government ($15 million), the Victorian Government ($4.5 million) and Ford Australia ($5 million) to provide matched funding for new private sector job creation projects that will strengthen and diversify Melbourne's northern regional economy and employment base. Initiatives co-funded in the first funding round are projected to generate almost 450 jobs.

- **Better Futures Local Solutions (BFLS)** was a short-lived initiative to boost education attainment, job readiness and child wellbeing. To complement the place-based approach which included flexible funding and localised governance, a range of measures to boost economic participation were trialled concurrently in the same locations. These included the Jobless Families trial, Job Services Australia demonstration projects, the Priority Employment Area initiative and Local Connections to Work. With no published evaluation and a reported lack of baseline data, it is impossible to assess the impact of BFLS. However, anecdotally, it is understood that those areas that forged strong connections with business and included employers in their governance structures had promising employment outcomes. In Burnie (Tas.), for example, a local jobs campaign highlighted labour market opportunities and employer expectations, and built on a successful work experience program. In Logan (Qld) over 300 jobs were filled through a jobs drive that incentivised employers to take on jobseekers experiencing disadvantage by offering recruitment and workforce development support and financial subsidies.

2. Collaborative governance, devolution of decision-making and capacity building

The next generation of place-based initiatives will necessitate a shift in the role of governments, from leader or manager to enabler. The focus needs to be on finding a shared voice. This requires deep engagement with local communities about what they hope for in their local community and what will make their community stronger and more liveable. It also requires collaborative governance mechanisms that have sufficient resources to enable the members to understand the issues, reflect community aspirations and reach agreement on the core things that need to happen to enable change. Such an approach however, rubs up against Australia's conventional centralised approach to decision-making.

Devolution of decision-making can be modelled on the principle of subsidiarity, which involves redistributing power to the local level so that decisions are made as close as possible to the citizen:

- For government agencies, this means responsibility for negotiating funding and service agreements would sit with the regional office, rather than centrally. It would also allow local

bureaucrats the flexibility (within reason) to adjust policies and programs. This would enable arrangements to better reflect and advance local aspirations than if determined remotely.

- For communities it means having a meaningful local involvement in determining the issues and solutions.

Subsidiarity is unpacked in the **Empowered Communities: Empowered Peoples** policy design framework (referred to earlier) as:

> Indigenous people empowering ourselves by taking all appropriate and necessary powers and responsibilities for our own lives and futures. It also means Commonwealth, state and territory governments sharing, and in some cases relinquishing, certain powers and responsibilities, and supporting Indigenous people with resources and capability building.

In Victoria, the **Neighbourhood Renewal** evaluation found that strongest outcomes (measured by the greatest improvements in the indicators) were achieved when significant government investment was combined with active community deliberation. Government agencies were able to achieve improved results that they could not have realised in isolation by co-designing responses with the community. For example, strong relationships with residents forged through Neighbourhood Renewal paved the way for progressive community policing: collaborative efforts paved the way for complementary investments to address crime hot spots, leading to a drop in crime rates.

Capacity building

The Commonwealth Place Based Delivery Key Learning Project observed that policy makers need to exercise judgement about when it is appropriate to devolve decisions and rely on the expertise of community leaders.

A strong message coming from community-led initiatives such as **Glenorchy Child**, a Tasmanian initiative to improve quality of life conditions for children, is that the best outcomes are achieved when individuals with lived experience of disadvantage (not just organisations) are involved, but that this takes investment. There is a need to 'power up' the community along the way so that there is an equitable platform for their aspirations, ideas, skills and resources to be harnessed.

The **Go Goldfields Alliance** in central Victoria has similarly identified the need to bring community into the heart of decision-making. In 2015 governance arrangements are being transformed to include residents with 'lived experience' of the issues the Alliance is tackling, as well as local employers and clubs. For example, they have recruited survivors of family violence into governance arrangements. Important considerations in recruitment are that those with lived experience also have leadership potential and are well networked in their community. Significant efforts are being made to orient and retain these recruits, including an extended process of induction, training and capacity building and payment of a stipend.

Strengthening the cultural capital of communities with a record of entrenched disadvantage is core to generating change. This might involve tackling views that 'people like us don't work'. In the Go Goldfields initiative, building capacity and confidence that change is possible has been identified as a standout factor. This has involved work with the community, the service sector and those in the governance structures. The governance group asks: what's our shared outcome and, if we get it right, what will it look like in the community? What do services need to do, what do decision makers

need to do, what does the community need to do? The message is that everyone has a job to do together.[13]

Accountability for public funds where decision-making is devolved

A challenge for governments is accountability for the expenditure of public funds in an environment of devolved decision-making. The Auditor-General's office considered this in its review of the **Communities for Children** initiative. It noted that while the model allows a flexible approach to local service delivery, it exposes the government to additional delivery risks. Local organisations are engaged by the Facilitating Partner (an NGO) to deliver services, rather than by the Department. This means that the usual risk assessment procedures and performance oversight by the Department are not present. The Auditor-General suggested that the Department could conduct regular surveys of Community Partners to gain their perspectives on operations and the relationship with Facilitating Partners, and possibly engage third party monitoring services as a way of managing these risks.[14]

3. Data as a public resource for community use

An understanding of local data is crucial to equip people to participate in informed decision-making. Much data is held by government agencies (particularly Centrelink and the Department of Social Services), as well as by a plethora of community organisations, but it is not linked, analysed and translated for local community use.

Playford (SA), one of the former **Better Futures Local Solutions** sites, is establishing a data observatory to analyse data from many sources. This will build understanding of who lives in Playford and their likely trajectory depending on their life circumstances. The project is tracking what has happened to people born in Playford in 1990. It is looking for the 'bright spots' that can generate positive change. Interestingly, it has revealed that of the 400 young people who received income support at 15 years old, just 150 were still on income support at 25. Further, the majority of 25-year-old income support recipients who currently reside in Playford were not born there. This is providing new insights into local issues and the responses required. This work is backed by a collaboration of community organisations, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, a university and relevant state and Australian government agencies. The project is chaired by the CEO of the City of Playford.

4. Flexible policy and program responses that enable different places to do different things

A big policy challenge is how to 'bend the mainstream' so that local communities are empowered to play to their strengths and how to mould national and state policies and programs to advance community aspirations.

- The **Cape York Welfare Reform trial** (Qld), running since 2008, probably represents Australia's most radical example of local adaptation of national and state policy instruments. The trial aims to restore positive social norms, re-establish local Elder authority, enable

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[13] Sharon Fraser, Central Goldfields Shire, speaking at a briefing on the *Dropping off the edge* report, 12 August 2015, Richmond, Vic.
[14] The Auditor-General's Audit Report no.18 2012–13, *Performance audit administration of Communities for Children under the Family Support Program*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australian National Audit Office, Canberra.

children to realise their full potential, support economic engagement and home ownership. Federal legislation was enacted to establish Family Responsibility Commissions in the four trial sites. Community Elders are employed as Commissioners, and have the authority to attach behavioural obligations to the receipt of welfare payments, representing a fundamentally different approach to welfare policy from the rest of the nation. The FRCs also develop locally tailored community services and educational, economic development, employment and housing initiatives—such as wellbeing centres, school attendance case managers, parenting programs, and anti-violence, drug and alcohol services.

- The **Glenorchy Child** initiative illustrates some modest yet tangible localisation of policy, with the Tasmanian Education Department allowing a single report on funding allocations to be submitted by an alliance of five school communities, bending staff recruitment processes to include a 'fit' with the Collective Plan as part of the selection criteria, and opening up access to data. To achieve more substantial policy change, it is recognised that senior members of a range of government agencies need to be at the table. Accordingly, governance arrangements have been extended to bring additional government agencies and service organisation into the initiative.

- **Go Goldfields** has achieved significant service reforms to embed a focus on literacy in all early years programs across the Central Goldfields Shire and to proactively tackle language and developmental delays through a complete redesign of speech pathology and related services. These reforms are yielding impressive results evidenced by improved reading levels and reduced developmental vulnerabilities among Prep children. Flexible funding has been critical to support these changes, and has been used to build the capacity of local services to do things differently. While Go Goldfields has enjoyed strong buy-in from council and state government leadership, there has been an ongoing need to ensure this translates into a more flexible approach by middle managers, particularly those managing government contracts. Service redesign has been limited by the organisations' funding and service agreements.

We have been advised that there are many examples of national or state policies being flexed in response to local circumstances but that they frequently occur 'under the radar' lest they be blocked by central bureaucrats. Senior public servants, with both the power and the ingenuity to bend approaches where necessary, are a key ingredient in enabling flexible policy and program responses.

5. Government funding to foster local innovation and collaboration and improve outcomes

Flexible funding is another critical ingredient. This does not necessarily require additional public money but could instead involve redeployment of existing resources, capitation (packaging together money from separate funding streams) and leveraging alternative revenue sources, including philanthropic contributions, and non-monetary contributions. It does, however, require a reorientation of the way government funding is provided. It necessitates a shift from siloed and competitive funding to an approach that fosters local collaboration and innovation and that considers the long term return on investment. Some promising examples include:

- Most of the Victorian Government investment in **Neighbourhood Renewal** came from the reprioritisation and refocusing of existing funds. This required departments to change their ways to enable core funding to be applied to the initiative. For example, services funded through the housing budget were subject to social procurement, with social objectives to train and employ local residents. Education funds were applied to reflect local aspirations: schools were enabled to provide services and facilities open to the broader community and school canteens were used as social enterprises to train and employ local residents. Crime hot spots attracted investment from Victoria Police, local government and the Department of Planning and Community Development to tackle the issue collaboratively. Investment coordinated across portfolios generated outcomes that could not have been achieved in isolation. It represented a win–win for the community and government and a notable change in the way government worked.

- **Better Futures Local Solutions** required applications for Local Solutions Funding to be locally brokered. Increasingly proposals were developed collectively, in response to locally identified service gaps. Many BFLS projects involved application and delivery by a consortium of partners—a significant departure from the norm of community organisations bidding against each other and delivering funded services in isolation.

- Contracting and funding models that preference and value local organisations that are embedded in and trusted by their local community should be favoured over those that push organisations to expand and aggregate. Local organisations are well placed to harness the skills, altruism and resources of their community; these need to be safeguarded. The lead provider model used in **Communities for Children** gives smaller community organisations the chance to develop their capacity and build their skills by participating in training, attracting funding and developing networks. It builds on local connections.

- The **Promise Neighborhoods** example from the United States, profiled below, illustrates a radically different approach to funding by requiring local agencies to align their efforts.

Promise Neighborhoods: a fundamentally different approach by the US Government

Inspired by the success of the Harlem Children's Zone, the US Department of Education introduced the Promise Neighborhoods Program in 2010 to 'significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in our most distressed communities, and to transform those communities'.

Applicants for Promise Neighborhoods funding need to demonstrate that the initiative will:
- Identify and increase the capacity of eligible entities that are focused on achieving results for children and youth throughout an entire neighbourhood;
- Build a complete continuum of cradle-to-career solutions of both educational programs and family and community supports, with great schools at the centre;
- Integrate programs and break down agency 'silos' so that solutions are implemented effectively and efficiently across agencies;
- Develop the local infrastructure of systems and resources needed to sustain and scale up proven, effective solutions across the broader region beyond the initial neighbourhood; and
- Learn about the overall impact of the Promise Neighborhoods program and about the relationship between particular strategies in Promise Neighborhoods and student outcomes, including through a rigorous evaluation of the program.

6. Alignment of government efforts and resources across different parts and levels of government

While some promising examples of cross-government coordination are emerging, Australia still has a long way to go to effectively align the efforts and resources of different parts and levels of government to support place-based initiatives. This is a complex aspiration in our federal system and requires a move away from the tribalism of departments towards horizontal organisation.

- Co-location of different government agencies and levels of government in Regional Operations Centres was a feature of the **COAG Remote Service Delivery trials.** The Australian Government also assigned a departmental secretary to take responsibility for coordinating government efforts for each Remote Service Delivery trial. We understand that, while this was an improvement on the previous lack of coordination (evidenced by the disconnected multitude of public servants flying in and out of remote communities) many challenges limited effectiveness. Public servants appeared reluctant to report to a secretary of another department. Furthermore, ministers and departments were unwilling to relinquish control over priorities, program operation and budgets. Audit responsibilities and risk management presented as obstacles to integration efforts.

- Buy-in by Victorian Government Ministers to **Neighbourhood Renewal** is credited with driving coordination and joined-up investment. The initiative was closely monitored by Cabinet and a committee of departmental secretaries, who were called on to free up blockages that could not be resolved down the chain. This high-level attention enabled the bottom-up agenda identified by local residents to be implemented. It created a mechanism to respond to community aspirations and drive government action.

- Cross-government participation in community governance mechanisms is a feature of many place-based initiatives. It reflects the viewpoint that it is more effective to bring all key government voices around the table than try to channel them through a single voice. The **Fitzroy Futures Forum** (WA) has a governing committee that brings together the chairpersons of the language groups of the Aboriginal communities of Fitzroy Crossing, other community members, and representatives of all levels of government. **Go Goldfields** has a Departmental Steering Group which brings together key agencies from all three levels of government. The Enabling Group in the new **Burnie Works** initiative includes representatives from all three levels of government, but as advisers rather than decision makers. A Policy Reference group will identify policy reforms that would support the initiative.

- **Better Futures Local Solutions** employed a Government Action Leader at each location to improve the coordination of government efforts, as well as a Community Action Leader. It has been broadly acknowledged that these roles were effective at fostering collaboration, building connections and leveraging resources. However, the engagement of local and state governments varied considerably across sites.

The importance of local government

As the level of government closest to the community, local governments can be crucial players in any place-based partnership. Arguably, local government provides the natural home for engaging citizens in community governance and for place-based initiatives. An approach with local government at the core could avoid the risks involved in the proliferation of parallel place-based

initiatives. A caution we have heard in the preparation of this paper is that federal and state governments, when establishing place-based initiatives, need to exercise care not to shift into areas that sit more appropriately with local government.

7. A commitment to research, evaluation and outcomes

A message from recent research[15] is that Australia's evidence base around place-based initiatives is lacking, particularly in terms of understanding what works, why it works and whether these approaches realise significant cost savings to government. For the initiatives that have published reviews available, the quality is variable. Baseline data and measurable outcomes have not been a feature of some recent place-based endeavours, such as the Better Futures Local Solutions.

Neighbourhood Renewal was a good example of an initiative with transparent outcomes and measurement. It had a clearly defined target population (those living in disadvantaged communities with high concentrations of public housing), clear outcomes (narrowing the gap with other neighbourhoods) and clear measures (38 core indicators which tracked changes in areas such as household income, employment, crime, child protection substantiations, education attainment, school absenteeism, standards of housing, perceptions of neighbourhood and community pride). It was supported by a robust evaluation that measured progress against these indicators.

US President Obama has placed a high value on evaluating outcomes for all government social spending and developed new frameworks for measuring the impact of government programs. This is supported by a requirement that government funded programs set aside 1–3% of the total grant for high-quality evaluations. This is reflected in the focus on data collection, outcomes and performance measurement and evaluation in the Promise Neighbourhoods Program.

8. A long-term commitment

A repeated theme is that to turn around entrenched disadvantage, a long-term commitment is needed: in the order of 10–20 years. The challenge of balancing the long-term effort required with the imperatives of short-term political cycles and the need to keep partners and communities engaged is very real. There is also the tension between the need for governments to be seen to take rapid action and the need to tackle entrenched disadvantage, which is a longer term exercise.

A series of quick and sustained wins, even if they are relatively minor ones, can help to sustain local interest and political momentum. A couple of examples can be cited:

- The Immediate Improvement Program in Victoria's **Neighbourhood Renewal**, which enabled a rapid response to issues such as repairing fences or focusing on a crime hot spot, was credited with helping to build and maintain momentum.
- The frequent reporting of progress against set outcomes (a practice used in Collective Impact initiatives such as **Glenorchy Child**) is serving to build interest and engagement.

It is also important to future-proof efforts so they are not vulnerable to political cycles. Initiatives that are owned by the community, rather than those that are led or managed by governments, are more likely to survive changes of government.

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[15] See, for example, S Wilks, J Lahausse and B Edwards, Commonwealth *place-based service delivery initiatives: key learnings project*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 2015; and TG Moore et al., op. cit.

9. Testing the Collective Impact approach

Collective Impact is emerging as an effective approach to tackle concentrated disadvantage. Advice from those using this approach in Australia is that Collective Impact has strengthened previous attempts at collaboration and makes combined efforts more productive. It is designed to overcome the challenges inherent in multiple layers of governance, conflicting priorities of funders, competition between agencies to attract funding and a lack of data sharing.

What is Collective Impact

The underlying premise of Collective Impact is that no single organisation or government can create large-scale, lasting social change alone. Collective Impact is a structured and rigorous approach that is essentially about alignment of efforts. It involves all sectors of the community reaching a shared vision, a shared set of desired outcomes that will be transparently measured and a commitment to deliver and contribute in their areas of influence in line with a shared plan of action. The core elements of the Collective Impact model[16] include:

- a common agenda for change, including a shared understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed actions
- collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants to ensure shared measurement for alignment and accountability
- a plan of action that outlines and coordinates mutually reinforcing activities for each participant
- open and continuous communication across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives and create common motivation
- a backbone organisation with staff and specific sets of skills to serve the entire initiative, coordinate partners and hold them to account, track data and outcomes and mobilise investment.

There is a growing list of examples across North America where a Collective Impact approach is reportedly driving quantum improvements in diverse areas such as school retention and attainment (Harlem Children's Zone in New York and Strive in Cincinnati), employment for public housing residents (Opportunity Chicago), job creation (Memphis Fast Forward), homelessness (Calgary Canada), poverty (Vibrant Communities Canada), river rejuvenation (Elizabeth River, Virginia) and child obesity (Somerville, Massachusetts).

Collective Impact in Australia

Small, community-generated initiatives are springing up across Australia using the Collective Impact framework. Examples include:

- **Glenorchy Child** (Tas.) is one of Australia's most mature Collective Impact projects. Running since 2009, it is showing some promising indications that education outcomes for children and young people are shifting.
- Several sites that were part of the **Better Futures Local Solutions** initiative have embraced the Collective Impact approach. Burnie (Tas.) has recently secured support from The Search (convened by the Centre for Social Impact) to tackle worklessness caused by entrenched social disadvantage and poor educational outcomes. The BFLS established Local Action

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[16]http://collectiveimpactaustralia.com/about/

Group has morphed into an Enabling Group, with broader membership including employers, residents and all three levels of government. Logan (Qld) has secured support from the ten20 Foundation to implement a Collective Impact approach, which will extend across a large population of 300,000. A group of 'sector connectors' in Hume are exploring a Collective Impact approach.

- The ten20 Foundation has recently launched **Opportunity Child** to explore, strengthen and support the Collective Impact approach. Co-convened by Woodside, it will provide support over 10 years to identified communities that are working to improve quality of life for children. Currently 15 communities are being supported through this model. Opportunity Child is also investing in tools and learning opportunities about Collective Impact, building a national outcomes framework linked into local community metrics, an economic model and local business case for the work, and a strong evaluative stream, focusing on scalability and systems shift.

- The Centre for Social Impact is actively researching how the Collective Impact model is being used in Australia. They are also providing practical support, through small grants and advice, to a number of initiatives inspired by the Collective Impact model.

Australian governments supporting Collective Impact

Governments are also starting to dip their toes in the Collective Impact waters:

- The South Australian Government is a founding partner in **Together SA**, which has a vision to grow Collective Impact initiatives to create better futures for children and young people in the state. Together SA's activities include awareness raising, championing, facilitating and supporting community leaders seeking to tackle complex social problems and ensuring appropriate backbone support to local initiatives.[17]

- The Victorian Government has provided funding to the **Go Goldfields** initiative, which is reporting some striking improvements and is formally transitioning to a Collective Impact model in 2015.

10. Use existing networks and infrastructure

Rather than trying to start again or thinking of place-based as a 'green field activity', there are existing networks in many places that could be enabled to undertake new collaborations or service offerings, to build new partnerships, to attract funding and capacity to evaluate their own effectiveness. For example, there are 52 Communities for Children networks which could be refreshed and strengthened in a future approach to support collective efforts to improve outcomes for children. Victoria has Local Learning and Employment Networks throughout the state, which connect stakeholders supporting the transitions of 13–19 year olds through school and into further study, training or work.

Place-based initiatives fare better where they pivot around universal services. For initiatives about children's wellbeing, childcare, maternal and child health services and schools are the logical

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[17] http://togethersa.org.au

platforms. **Go Goldfields** essentially hangs off Maternal and Child Health services and schools. Schools are the platform for **Glenorchy Child** and for a number of other promising initiatives.[18]

Centrelink may provide a logical platform for initiatives aimed at recipients of income support and has indeed housed several coordination initiatives such as Local Connections to Work.

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[18]In Challis (WA) the primary school houses early education and care, together with a broad range of child, family and parenting supports and allied health services. Similarly, Doveton College (Vic.) is a birth to Year 9 community learning centre that integrates family and children's services within a school, delivered through a social-government partnership.

Appendix: Some Australian case studies of place-based initiatives than engage community

Better Futures Local Solutions

What worked well in BFLS

- The Local Advisory Groups (LAGs) strengthened local collaboration and enduring networks were built. Key players interested in lifting disadvantage were brought together to identify joint solutions.
- The Community Action Leader (CAL) and Government Action Leader (GAL) roles were effective at fostering collaboration, building connections and leveraging resources, once their potential was understood.
- Areas with close employer connections delivered promising local employment outcomes (e.g. Burnie Jobs Campaign, Logan employment initiatives).
- Local capacity to plan, think strategically, share knowledge and learn from doing was strengthened.
- DHS and Centrelink achieved a much clearer line of sight to the broader service network and increased their capacity to assist people experiencing disadvantage.
- Sites that established strong relationships with local government have a platform from which to sustain efforts.
- Flexible funding fostered local innovation and collaboration. Funding proposals were increasingly developed collaboratively. Many initiatives were co-delivered by multiple organisations.
- Many initiatives made a tangible difference to the lives of participants and their families.
- National–local policy connections were being initiated and fostered by the National Place Based Advisory Group (NPBAG).

Ways BFLS could have been improved

- Stronger engagement with communities at the front end and throughout was needed.
- Governance structures principally comprised services and government agencies (not residents).
- A strong, central coordinating mechanism was needed to drive the initiative locally. The Host Organisation was not equipped to play this role.
- Employers are central to addressing disadvantage and needed to be more explicitly embedded in the design and governance arrangements.
- Comprehensive baseline data, service mapping, investment in data collection and analysis were needed to support an evidence-informed approach.
- The opportunity for a parallel state-based approach was not realised in most locations. Future initiatives ought to embed state and local government in the design and governance.
- Funding was too small to effect substantial change. BFLS invested $700,000 to $1.6 million per site.
- Adequate lead time between the establishment of LAGs and the first funding round would have enabled a more strategic approach.
- Shared measurements and outcomes, together with enhanced data collection would have enabled outcomes to be measured and progress to be tracked over time.
- The initiative was cut short before it could have significant impact.

Better Futures Local Solutions	
Duration	2012–14
Location	Logan (Qld), Rockhampton (Qld), Playford (SA), Bankstown (NSW), Wyong (NSW), Shellharbour (NSW), Greater Shepparton (Vic.), Hume (Vic.), Burnie (Tas.) and Kwinana (WA) were chosen based on levels of unemployment, the number of people relying on income support and the length of time they had been receiving it.
Context	Better Futures Local Solutions commenced in 2012 as a Rudd government initiative and was prematurely cut short following the election of the Abbott government. BFLS was a place-based initiative within the Building Australia's Future Workforce package. Running concurrently in the same locations was a Jobless Families trial (which comprised increased participation requirements and additional services for teenage parents and jobless families), income management and Job Services Australia demonstration projects. BFLS areas were also aligned with the Priority Employment Area initiative. The Local Connections to Work initiative (co-location of support services at Centrelink offices) ran concurrently in some BFLS locations. The Communities for Children initiative was extended to all BFLS locations.
Focus	Underpinned by an emphasis on building human capital, BFLS sought to boost education attainment, job readiness and child wellbeing.
Governance	A Local Advisory Group was established in each area. The LAG was responsible for strategic leadership, including identifying priorities, developing and recommending potential projects for funding, and advising on improving local coordination to increase social and economic participation. The National Place-Based Advisory Committee (NPBAG) brought together people with relevant expertise from business, not for profits, finance/philanthropy and academia to advise the Minister for Human Services about the BFLS program, the allocation of funding and how to support localised initiatives to lift social and economic participation. The NPBAG lapsed in September 2013.
Coordination	Unique to the BFLS model were the local roles of Government Action Leader (GAL) and Community Action Leader (CAL). Their purpose was to engage stakeholders, coordinate actions between government and community partners, support the work of the LAG, and support local grant applications. The CAL and their employer Host Organisation were responsible for managing funding agreements and monitoring the delivery of funded projects.
Funding	Australian Government funding ($20m) comprised the Local Solutions Fund ($10m) to support locally designed projects and a strategic projects fund ($10m) for projects identified by NPBAG that aligned with national priorities. However, the strategic projects funding was frozen, so it remained unspent; and the final round of local funding did not proceed. Funding of BFLS ceased in July 2014, 12 months earlier than expected.
Role of federal/state Governments	An initiative of the Australian Government, which funded and managed the initiative through DHS. Developed without input from state governments. No formal role for state governments, although they participated in the initiative in some locations.
Outcomes	No evaluation has been published to date.
Further information	S Wilks, J Lahausse and B Edwards, *Commonwealth Place-Based Service Delivery Initiatives: Key Learnings Project,* a report prepared by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, 2014.

Communities for Children

What is working well in Communities for Children (CfC)

- CfC has been embedded in communities. The CfC Committees have been reasonably effective at engaging services, identifying service gaps and developing localised services.
- The role played by Facilitating Partners in asset mapping, community development, program establishment, facilitation, coordination, implementation and support has been a major strength.
- Service coordination has improved markedly, as has cooperation between providers. Increasing numbers of CfC funded activities are being conducted in partnerships involving multiple organisations or groups.
- Service providers generally prefer the CfC funding model to direct funding because it allows flexibility and builds on local connections.
- The model enables smaller community organisations to build their capacity through the opportunity to participate in training, attract funding and develop networks.

Areas for improvement in CfC

- In some sites, CfC committees are operating more as advisory groups than governance bodies, with little influence over decisions.
- Community engagement varies across locations. CfC committees have found it challenging to recruit smaller service providers, business representatives, and parents of young children.
- There has been some disengagement of community as CfC has progressed, and a shift in focus from initial community consultation to project management of CfC services.
- In some locations, Facilitating Partners have struggled to be perceived as neutral brokers.
- The CfC initiative has been very difficult to establish and implement in remote areas because of limited infrastructure, high costs, short time frames, difficulty in the recruitment and retention of staff and extreme seasonal weather.
- Stakeholders from other place-based initiatives have reported difficulties in connecting with CfC.
- Competitive tendering has caused tensions in some CfC sites and funding for Facilitating Partners has not always been sufficient to cover the workload.
- CfC could better build on the strengths of existing universal services like maternal and child health services, child care and schools rather than trying to attract parents elsewhere.

Communities for Children	
Duration	2004–ongoing
Location	It has been incrementally expanded from 35 locations and now operates in 52 disadvantaged communities across Australia identified as suffering economic stress.
Context	Introduced by the Howard Government in 2004 (as part of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy) and heavily influenced by the UK's Sure Start initiative, Communities for Children is Australia's longest surviving nationally funded place-based initiative. It has gone through a series of iterations, surviving two changes of government. In 2008 CfC became part of the Family Support Program under a restructuring of community support programs to improve targeting and integration. In 2011, it was further restructured, with a large number of children and parenting programs brought under the CfC banner in an attempt to reduce fragmentation and better align existing activities. Two streams were added: CfC Direct and CfC Indigenous Parenting Services.

Focus	CfC is designed to enhance the development of children experiencing disadvantage. Initially aimed at 0–5 year olds, it has been extended to 0–12 year olds. The objectives of the CfC are: To improve the health and wellbeing of families and the development of young children, from before birth to age 12 years, paying special attention to: • healthy young families, supporting parents to care for their children before and after birth and throughout the early years; • supporting families and parents to provide children with secure attachment, consistent discipline and quality environments that are stable, positive, stimulating, safe and secure; • early learning, providing access to high-quality early learning opportunities in the years before school; providing early identification and support for children at risk of developmental and behavioural problems; assisting parents to stimulate and promote child development and learning from birth; and • school transition and engagement, supporting children and families to make a smooth transition to school and working with local schools to assist children and families with their ongoing engagement with school. To create strong child-friendly communities that understand the importance of children and apply this capacity to maximise the health, wellbeing and early development of young children at the local level. While CfC services are universal, priority is given to families with risk factors.
Governance	A local CfC committee is chaired by the Facilitating Partner. It drives the direction of the initiative in the site and is the key decision-making mechanism. Committee membership includes clients, parents and caregivers, local businesses and service providers. Employees of government departments, whether Australian, state or territory or local governments, may be involved in an advisory capacity only. A Families and Children Expert Panel works with service providers to advise, mentor and train agencies in how to develop, deliver and evaluate high-quality programmes and practices. In addition, the expert panel will provide Facilitating Partners with a guide to which programmes are defined as high-quality, evidence-based programmes.
Coordination	The Facilitating Partner (an NGO) is responsible for overall management of CfC within the site. This includes developing and implementing a strategic, sustainable whole-of-community approach to childhood development in consultation with local stakeholders. This is captured in a strategic plan and annual service delivery plans. Facilitating Partners are required to build on local strengths to meet local community needs and create capability within local service systems. This includes collaborating with other organisations to provide a holistic service system for children and families. The types of services delivered are decided by the Committee based on community needs. Facilitating Partners (which generally do not provide direct client services themselves) contract other agencies to deliver services such as parenting support, group peer support, case management, home visits and other supports to promote child wellbeing.

Funding	Funding from the Australian Government (DSS) A further five years of funding has recently been provided (from 2014–15). The Facilitating Partner manages the overall funding allocation. Most of the funds are allocated to local service providers that deliver the activities specified in their community strategic plans and service delivery plans. The remaining funds are available for flexible use, including supporting the Facilitating Partner to undertake local facilitation, coordination and collaborative work and to fund soft-entry, innovative programs. The newer CfC Direct and CfC Indigenous Parenting Services streams are funded directly from DSS, not through the Facilitating Partner.
Role of federal/state governments	An initiative of the Australian Government (DSS). Operating guidelines require the Facilitating Partner to: • build strong links and establish working relationships with state and territory government funded services, including schools, preschools, child protection services, and maternal and child health; • link services with other Commonwealth-funded services such as Family Relationship Centres, Family and Relationship Services, the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) and Job Services Australia; • link universal services with specialist support services and adult secondary services to ensure vulnerable children who are identified as at high risk receive appropriate referral; • build collaborative relationships with adult services such as mental health, family violence, housing and alcohol and other drug services, to help them support their adult clients to meet the needs of their children; and • complement and add value to any existing collaboration mechanisms in the local community.
Outcomes	A 2004–2008 evaluation, undertaken when the CfC initiative was for 0–5 year olds, indicated positive outcomes in terms of parenting practices, parental employment, community involvement and children's early learning when compared with those living in comparison sites. However, it is reported[19] that the 2014 evaluation (not yet published) found that children and families in the comparison sites appear to 'catch up' with those in the CfC sites after they commenced school.
Further information	Australian Government Department of Social Services, *Communities for Children Facilitating Partner Operational Guidelines*, September 2014. K Muir, I Katz, B Edwards, M Gray, S Wise and A Hayes, 'The national evaluation of the Communities for Children initiative', *Family Matters*, no. 84, 2011, pp. 35–42. K Muir, I Katz, C Purcal, R Patulny, S Flaxman, D Abello et al., *National evaluation (2004–2008) of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004–2009* , occasional paper no. 24, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, 2009. Outcomes from the Stage 2 evaluation of Communities for Children (2014) are referred to in the *Commonwealth Place-Based Service Delivery Initiatives: Key Learnings Project*, report prepared by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, 2014

Neighbourhood Renewal (Vic.)

What worked well in Neighbourhood Renewal

- It was a bottom-up initiative that empowered local residents, made effective by authorisation, coordination and monitoring by the highest levels of state government (ministers and secretaries).
- Joined-up investment and flexible resources enabled government to respond to community priorities in a timely way, use existing funds more effectively and creating a multiplier effect of investment.
- Projects were able to leverage significant additional resources: for every $1 allocated by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, a further $7 was leveraged from governments, business and community organisations.
- The strongest outcomes were achieved when significant government investment was combined with active community deliberation.
- Government agencies were able to achieve improved results, which they could not have realised in isolation, by co-designing responses with the community. For example, strong relationships paved the way for progressive community policing: collaboration led to combined investments to tackle crime in known hot spots, which resulted in a drop in crime rates.
- Coordinated investment in workforce participation programs, the use of social procurement and the establishment of community enterprises assisted in creating over 5000 jobs and contributed to a 4% reduction in unemployment.
- A core part of the role of the Work and Learning Coordinator (located in the Neighbourhood Teams) was to work with business, local government economic development teams and Regional Development Victoria to get better job outcomes for local residents.
- An Immediate Improvements Program enabled rapid action on small issues that could easily be addressed. Early quick wins were an important part of building and maintaining momentum.
- The evaluation was comprehensive and measured outcomes across a broad range of indicators. Data was released on some things that had not previously been publicly reported (e.g. analysis of local crime statistics).

Ways it could have been improved:
- The expertise of the lead department (Human Services) was in responding to the symptoms of disadvantage rather than tackling the underlying causes in any sustained way.
- A central government agency (DPC) might have provided a more effective vehicle to drive whole-of-government effort.
- More needed to be done to systemically turn around the deep exclusion prevalent in the targeted communities.
- The evaluation found Neighbourhood Renewal needed to be scaled up, with stronger investment in the critical areas of the early years, educational engagement, employment and training.
- Where government programs operated in the mode of business as usual there was limited or no demonstrated progress against the indicators.
- It was hard to get participation of non-public housing residents in areas with lower proportions of public housing.

- Some locations (particularly regional) struggled because of the lack of local job opportunities. This would have required investment in local economic development.
- In areas with higher concentrations of public housing, investment in urban redevelopment to create more diverse, mixed communities would have been effective.
- More effort to establish affordable proximate housing is critical, for example in Kensington where a more blended community has been created.
- 'Mainstreaming' of Neighbourhood Renewal happened prematurely. Efforts waned with the disappearance of the Neighbourhood Teams.

Neighbourhood Renewal (Vic.)	
Duration	2002–2010. After 2010, Neighbourhood Renewal was transitioned into the mainstream business of the Department. While it still exists in name, it has a different form. Active projects at two locations continue, including a social enterprise employment initiative in Kensington, employing over 500 staff.
Location	Wendouree West, La Trobe Valley, Fitzroy, Collingwood, Shepparton, Seymour, Eaglehawk–Long Gully, Maidstone–Braybrook, Corio–Norlane, Broadmeadows, Colac, Werribee, Ashburton–Ashwood–Chadstone, Doveton–Eumemmerring, Hastings, West Heidelberg, East Reservoir, Delacombe.
Context	Inspired by the UK's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal and its New Deal for Communities, the Bracks government in Victoria introduced a series of place-based initiatives to support communities experiencing disadvantage as part of its 'Fairer Victoria' strategy. Neighbourhood Renewal was the flagship. Others included the Community Building Initiative (regeneration of small towns) and Community Renewal (in disadvantaged urban centres). This systemic approach to tackling disadvantage was framed as a whole-of-government initiative. Ministers were signed up to contribute to its joint delivery portfolios such as housing, human services, education and training, employment, transport, planning, police and justice.
Focus	To reduce the gap between 19 disadvantaged communities with high concentrations of public housing and the rest of the state, focusing on six action areas: 1. increasing pride and participation 2. enhancing housing and the physical environment 3. increasing employment, learning opportunities and economic participation 4. improving personal safety and reducing crime 5. improving health and wellbeing 6. improving access to services and improving government responsiveness.
Governance	Community governance, with at least 50% of positions on all Neighbourhood Renewal decision-making bodies occupied by local residents. In government, the initiative was closely monitored by Cabinet and a committee of departmental secretaries (SCAM).
Coordination	Neighbourhood Teams were established to foster empowerment of local citizens, develop and coordinate local area plans with local government, broker partnerships, allocate resources and bring new resources into the area. The teams comprised a senior public servant (employed by either state or local government), an employment and learning coordinator, a community development worker and administrative support.

Funding	In addition to funding to staff the Neighbourhood Teams, the NR budget included a small allocation of flexible funding. Unlike the UK's Neighbourhood Renewal initiative, which came with significant discrete funds, the bulk of funding for Victoria's NR came from the reprioritisation and refocusing of existing funds to join up government investment.
Role of federal/state governments	Designed, managed and funded by the Victorian Government. Engagement with the Australian Government was limited. The opportunity to use the place-management arrangements established under Neighbourhood Renewal as a launch pad for a national place-based initiative was not harnessed.
Outcomes	A 2008 evaluation found that Neighbourhood Renewal was 'reversing the effects of many years of cumulative disadvantage'. Improvements were recorded in 69% of the indicators (like reduced unemployment, increased further education qualifications, reduced school absenteeism, increased civic participation and reduced property crime) with 18% of the indicators remaining steady, bucking the previous trend of decline. The gap with other neighbourhoods narrowed across a broad range of indicators. The evaluation concluded that the 'methodology of place-based renewal works'. A review of the learnings of Neighbourhood Renewal experience has recently commenced. Some reflections beyond the 2008 evaluation include: ➢ Partnerships were critical. The most effective sites established strong links with local government, schools, police, employers and other stakeholders. In some locations, strong partnerships have enabled efforts to continue: for example in Maidstone–Braybrook, local government continues to drive efforts, and in Geelong Northern Futures has been established. ➢ The skills of place managers impacted on the effectiveness at each site. A broad range of skills were required including relationship building; leveraging resources; project development and management; and community development. ➢ It was hard to get participation of non-public housing residents in areas with lower proportions of public housing. ➢ A spin-off of Neighbourhood Renewal has been a place-management approach to tenancy management. If a resident is in rental arrears, this involves looking at the underlying causes, and making linkages with support services.
Further information	Department of Human Services, *Neighbourhood Renewal: evaluation report 2008*, Victorian Government, Melbourne, 2009. Department of Human Services, *Neighbourhood Renewal: learning and working together – employment, education and enterprise outcomes*, Victorian Government, Melbourne, 2007. D Ferrie, *What we have already done that is valuable for the future*, Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Department of Planning and Community Development Social Inclusion and Place-Based Disadvantage Workshop Proceedings, Fitzroy, Victoria, 13 June 2008 A Wear, 'Place-based partnerships in Victoria', *Public Administration Today*, no. 12, 2007, pp. 20–6.

Go Goldfields (Vic)

What's working well in Go Goldfields

- There has been strong and continuing buy-in of Alliance partners and good consultation with community. The model has enabled local good to be harnessed and localised solutions to be identified and implemented.
- There is an intention to employ a place-based planning approach. Initiatives are driven from within the community, as opposed to being established and researched by bodies outside the area and then implemented in the community.
- Having a fully funded plan and flexible funding has been pivotal to maintaining the commitment and enthusiasm of Alliance partners over an extended period, building the capacity of local services to do things differently and leveraging co-investments. Victorian Government financial backing has been critical.
- Service reforms have been critical to changing outcomes. Flexible funding to support changed practices, together with a collective approach, has made these reforms possible.
- The local Council has realigned its work to support delivery of the plan.
- There has been a culture of continuous learning and adaptation, enabling Go Goldfields to progress through different stages of development.

Areas for improvement

- The Alliance has identified the need to strengthen community involvement, from consultation to active participation in decision-making. Over 2015, the Go Goldfields governance arrangements are being transformed to include business and residents with 'lived experience'.
- There is significant tension between place-based approaches and the organisation of government departments and program structures. While there has been strong buy-in from council and state government leadership, this needs to be translated into a more flexible approach by middle managers (especially contract managers).
- Service redesign is limited by organisations' funding and service agreements.
- The impact of Victorian community sector 'reforms' and resulting government tendering processes has meant the delivery of some services (mental health, drug and alcohol) has been regionalised and they are running out of Bendigo rather than locally. It is anticipated this may make a place-based approach less straightforward.

Go Goldfields (Vic.)	
Duration	2012–ongoing
Location	Central Goldfields Shire covers 1,532 sq kilometres and has a population of just over 12,500 people. Maryborough is the shire's major centre.
Context	Go Goldfields is a community-driven initiative designed to fight entrenched social disadvantage. Central Goldfields Shire faces some critical issues: in 2010 it had the highest child protection, re-reporting and out of home care rates in the DHS region; 60 per cent of children starting school required speech pathology; it had the lowest levels of post-secondary qualifications in Victoria, coupled with high levels of youth unemployment. Despite significant resourcing, there were few indications of improvement.

Focus	The Go Goldfields Great Outcomes Action Plan 2012–14 included a series of shire-wide approaches to improve social, education and health outcomes for children, youth and families. It sought to achieve the following outcomes: • a reduction in the incidence of notifications to DHS Child Protection Services (meaning a reduction in re-notifications and out of home care) • improved communication and literacy skills, opportunities and positive life experiences for children and their families • improved community connectedness for children, youth and families • improved youth connection to appropriate training and education to achieve employment outcomes • increased breastfeeding rates (this outcome reflects integration with integration with Best Start). The Alliance has prioritised initiatives aimed at prevention and early intervention, such as: • major reforms to the delivery of early years services to embed a focus on literacy • early intervention to tackle language and developmental delays through a comprehensive redesign of speech pathology and related services • a program of parent–school engagement involving all schools in the shire • parenting support and connections for vulnerable families. The Action Plan for 2015–17 strengthens the focus on youth and family literacy (extending it from the early years), parenting, family violence and ensuring that vulnerable families are included in broader community networks, social infrastructure and service responses. Common and shared data between partners will also be a focus. The intended outcomes have been revised, but major themes remain the same.
Governance	The Go Goldfield Alliance is chaired by the Mayor and comprises key community and service agency leaders. A fully funded Action Plan was developed by the Go Goldfields Alliance. The first covered 2012–14; the current one covers 2015–17. The Alliance is oversees delivery of the Plan and determines how to allocate funding received. There is a Departmental Steering Committee comprising council leadership together with Regional Directors (or above) from DHHS, DET (early years, schools and higher education represented), DOJ, Regional Development Victoria, the Australian Department of Human Services and Victoria Police. Action Groups chaired by Alliance members focus on specific areas: Early Years/Best Start, Youth Engagement and Workforce Development. In 2015 a Collaborative Table will be established as the key decision-making body, replacing the Alliance and Government Steering Committee. The membership will be broadened to include not just services, community groups and governments agencies, but importantly local businesses and residents with 'lived experience' of the focus issues.

Coordination	Central Goldfields Shire supports the Go Goldfield's governance and houses the Project Manager. The work of council staff is aligned to delivery of the Action Plan. Council has also taken the lead in establishing the evidence base, consolidating and sharing data. In December 2014, the Go Goldfields Alliance adopted the Collective Impact model to underpin future efforts, with Central Goldfields Shire to act as the backbone (coordinating organisation).
Funding	The initial plan received $2.5m from the Victorian Government's Regional Growth Fund in the 2011–12 Budget. Significant co-investment and in-kind contributions were leveraged from council, Rotary and individual businesses. In-kind support from community agencies is valued at $767,000 per year. The Best Start program joined the Alliance. The Victorian Government has committed a further $2m to the 2015-17 plan. There have also been commitments of $420,000 from Central Goldfields Shire and $300,000 from Best Start. The ten20 Foundation is also providing financial support and in-kind support.
Role of Federal/State Governments	The Departmental Steering Committee, including representatives from three levels of government, is responsible for providing government oversight; facilitating place-based approaches within government departments (i.e. trouble shooting); ensuring that program outcomes and evaluation informs ongoing policy and practice development. Involvement of the Australian Government has been limited. Centrelink has been part of the Alliance but regionalisation of offices has made it hard to secure regular participation on the Steering Committee.
Outcomes	A recent evaluation of the 2012–14 plan reported major improvements. Highlights include: • Reading levels in Prep-aged children have improved—up from 60% to 80% achieving Level 5; • Developmental vulnerability of Prep children has decreased; • The proportion of Preps requiring speech pathology has decreased from 60% to 27%; • Increased student–parent engagement is reported by schools; • There are increased positive connections between schools and vulnerable families.
Further information	Go Goldfields evaluation 2012–2014 (publication forthcoming) http://www.centralgoldfields.com.au/gogoldfields

Glenorchy Child (Tas.)

What's working well in Glenorchy Child
- A Collective Plan was developed during the initial iteration, which includes a shared set of outcomes and the actions that each partner will deliver. This plan is the primary filter and guide in all decision-making.
- There is shared data and measurement for alignment and accountability. This has been a strength of the core team of the Wellington Alliance and it has continued to evolve.
- Within a year, the five Alliance school communities were working to a common agenda and engaging in mutually reinforcing activities, including:
  - creation of a single school association, a single Aboriginal advisory board and a single multicultural advisory board;
  - a shared funding pool, contributed to by the Alliance schools;
  - common approaches to pedagogy (for improved literacy/numeracy), professional learning (for improved teacher performance), behaviour management (for improved focus on learning), mental health (for greater support of families and increased understanding of individual students), handover and transition systems (for smooth entry into high school and between schools);
  - a Personalised Learning Plan for every student from age 4 to Year 10, co-created by family. This is a 'living' document and includes social and emotional as well as learning goals;
  - timely responses to specific needs of any one school; and
  - identifying each staff member's contribution to the Collective Plan in their performance plans.
- Local policy adaptations have been agreed by the Tasmanian Education Department. For example:
  - school staff recruitment processes include a requirement that candidates are a good fit with the Collective Plan as part of the selection criteria;
  - departmental policy has moved to accept a single report from the five school communities regarding the allocated funding;
  - access to data was limited in the initial stages, but over time the state government has opened access and provided support to analyse data.
- Action research cycles bring in new knowledge and encourage continuous improvement.

Areas for improvement:
- To achieve more significant policy change, there is a need for senior members of government agencies to be at the table, authorised and willing to make decisions. (This is currently being addressed by expanding the range of government and service organisation participants).
- Accessing the supporting technology for a shared data system was initially an issue, principally due to funding constraints.

Glenorchy Child (Tas.)	
Duration	2009–ongoing
Location	Glenorchy, Tasmania. Northern suburbs of Hobart.
Context	A community-generated initiative and one of Australia's most mature Collective Impact projects, now entering its second generation.
Focus	Glenorchy Child initially concentrated on five school communities. The focus has recently been broadened to address quality of life conditions to create an environment for children, cradle to career, which enables them to be: loved and safe; healthy; learning; equipped with the material basics; participating, empowered and aspirational, (to align with the ARACY NEST National Outcomes Framework).
Governance	The Governing Group has met every fortnight since 2009. The group has developed a 'Way We Work' philosophy and practice which guides their involvement. This requires members to attend all meetings, without the option of a proxy, minimising the risk of under-informed representatives. There are an Alignment Group and Hubs (or working groups). The underpinning Wellington Alliance has a broad community base. It has recently been extended to include additional corporate bodies, state and commonwealth government departments, local government and NGOs. There is a strong foundation of peer accountability and peer review. There is shared professional learning, cross-sector working groups, and a combined Annual Alliance Professional Learning Conference.
Coordination	Performance Edge (a consultancy) has acted as the backbone for the endeavour. They are independent of partner agencies and stakeholders and do not provide any services in the initiative.
Funding	Funding has totalled more than $3 million. This has come principally through the pooling of Commonwealth School Renewal Funding by the participating schools. Additional funds have come from the Tasmanian government and philanthropic contributions. The initiative has secured a strong and sustained relationship with the ten20 Foundation.
Role of federal/state governments	The Tasmanian Education Department has been an increasingly active participant and enabler. The Australian Government has had little involvement other than their funds being applied (via the schools) to the initiative. An expansion of partners is currently taking place to include broader representation of government agencies. Recent engagement has demonstrated strong interest from all levels of government.
Outcomes	Early signs of success for the period 2009–2013 include: ➢ Parental involvement with their child's education has increased from 27% to 90%. ➢ Student motivation has risen from 17% to 95%. ➢ School attendance has increased to almost 94%. ➢ Behaviour, once a major target issue, is no longer a focus. Although still mapped, the rate and severity of behavioural incidents has lessened. ➢ Literacy and numeracy in Years 7–9 have significantly improved.