

*The Role of Participation, Positive Youth Development, and Social Entrepreneurship in Ensuring Successful Programmes in Australia*  
*Replicating Good Practice Without Compromising Quality*

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**BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW**

Because this chapter forms part of an international collection identifying programme and policy innovations, it tries to provide the specific Australian context regarding research and policy of programme applications aimed at enhancing the development of young people, their families, and their communities. As will become evident, the Australian context is influenced by international developments, in particular in countries that share the official language, English.

The chapter begins with an introduction to Australian social policy and programme context to set the scene. This is followed by a review of common factors of success and

failure in social projects and an overview of current trends in policy and practice, including positive youth development and youth participation, as well as a brief review of relevant federal government initiatives. The next section relates to appropriate replication strategies that ensure quality and local relevance and ensure that good practice knowledge is being transferred. The final section is concerned with how these issues can be taken forward.

The material in this chapter is strongly influenced by the author's professional and personal interest in the most vulnerable children, young people and families who are currently socially excluded. This does not mean, however, a focus limited to service-delivery

programmes targeting this particular client group. The contribution of mainstream private, public, and social institutions and services toward the social exclusion of vulnerable groups and the mechanisms required to redress this undesirable and disheartening consequence are central to the consideration of policy and programme innovations.

## INTRODUCTION

In Australia, awareness about social, economic, and environmental issues has increased in all sectors of society. Terms such as *civil society*, *citizen participation*, and *community development principles* have reemerged in policy and programme development, and the third sector is emerging as an important player with increasing influence. The term *third sector* refers to what is most commonly called the nonprofit, the non-government, or community sector (Lyons, 2001).

In this context, it is important to recognize that the social space in Australia has become a place of unprecedented investment (Botsman, 2001). In 1997 to 1998, \$A123 billion of a total combined government budget of \$A194 billion in current price terms (63% of the total budget) was allocated to the social wage.

The majority of the social wage is spent on social security, (\$45 billion or 23% of total government spending), health (\$A32 billion or 16% of total government spending) and education (\$25 billion or 13 % of total government spending). Combined or taken individually these areas dwarf every other area of spending; for example, the combined budget of defence and public order is \$A17 billion, or around 9% of total government funding.” (Botsman, 2001, p. 5)

The Australian government has introduced the privatisation of “welfare delivery

programmes” through elaborate competitive tendering processes to achieve economic savings as well as to improve social results. This has posed challenges as well as opportunities to the third sector. Many smaller third-sector organisations are unable to compete and attract the required funding to survive. Others have been able to take advantage of the situation and have grown considerably, resulting in increased “market share” and influence in policy development. This policy has also posed opportunities for many private enterprises to move into the “social welfare” delivery arena.

At the same time, corporations are struggling with corporate identity issues and good practices, as consumer pressure regarding corporate social responsibility increases. The current Australian government has actively encouraged partnerships between the third sector and the corporate sector. The Prime Minister’s Community Business Partnership was established in 1997 and has contributed to an increase in dialogue between the business and the third sector as well as stimulated the debate about the role of government in the social sector. Difficult questions have to be answered prior to making wide-ranging changes, such as: How can we maximise the benefits and reduce the risks and undesirable consequences of these changes in social welfare delivery? What are the results to be achieved and how will they be measured?

What stage of development are we at? Policymakers as well as practitioners in the third sector have concluded that a holistic approach to the “welfare” of the community is needed. New approaches, such as the research by James Garbarino (1995) concerning the “socially toxic” environment and its effect on children and young people, have led to the establishment of important pilot projects such as “communities that care” in the United States as well as, on a smaller scale, in Australia. International youth

participation and positive youth development research findings have also advanced policy and programme development in Australia. Although these developments are encouraging and positive, we remain in a situation of fragmented service delivery and disconnected policy development.

In an increasingly complex and competitive world market, human capital is one, if not the most, important resource for every country. In 1998, young people from 12 to 24 years old represented approximately 18.5% of the total Australian population of 19 million, of which approximately 2% are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. This is a substantial decline from 23.1% in 1971 (The Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, 1999). Despite the rhetoric of young people being the future of the country, many young people are reaching adulthood unprepared to be effective parents or productive and responsible citizens.

Successful, meaningful, and relevant education and economic participation remain, arguably, the most important priorities for present and future generations. We are not faring well in either of those areas for vulnerable groups in society, particularly disadvantaged young people. Despite all our efforts, we are losing ground, and systems designed to alleviate poverty do not deliver intended results. For example, 800,000 children (one in five) are living in households with parents who don't work. This is a disturbing fact, as there is a proven correlation between growing up in a jobless household and limited life chances for these children and young people (Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001, p. 4).

More than one in five families with dependent children are headed by a single parent (21%) compared to 13% 20 years ago (Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001). This is another disturbing fact, as more young women are single parents than

young men, and a very high percentage of single young mothers are low-paid part-time workers, which affects their ability to provide effectively for their children. These and other changes in social structures have had a significant effect on family life, creating a need for programmes to support and strengthen families and help them meet their children's needs.

## REVIEW OF BARRIERS TO SOCIAL PROGRESS AND FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS OF PROGRAMMES

### *Barriers to Social Progress in Project Delivery*

Today's efforts to alleviate social concerns for children and young people are still largely driven by the third sector alone. The third sector is not a homogeneous group of organisations and one of its outstanding characteristics is its fragmentation. This is complemented by an uncertain funding base, which can lead to high levels of volunteer involvement, low pay for part- and full-time work, lack of professional development opportunities, employee burnout, and in regard to service delivery organisations, management in crisis as opposed to implementation of well-planned proactive strategies. This is, of course, not so for all third-sector organisations and there are many positive characteristics of the third sector that will not be mentioned at this point, as this part of the chapter focuses solely on barriers to social progress.

A project manager in charge of a well-known and respected service assisting young homeless people in Australia once said that managing that service was like living in "a permanent soap opera." This particular manager was highly qualified academically but inexperienced in service delivery and left

the service after 6 months because of the lack of opportunity to introduce good practice principles and improve methods.

The third sector is under increased pressure to perform—not least of all due to increasing social problems at a high cost to the community—and finds itself in the public spotlight for many reasons, some of which have been mentioned earlier. It cannot afford to lose further talent nor sit back and allow the business sector and the government to develop solutions to social problems on their own.

Rather, the third sector needs to increase its effectiveness, adopt the best business methods, and document its unique knowledge if it is to be a force for change and an effective, credible, and equal partner to businesses and governments at all levels. The third sector has to be proactive and pave the way for the rest of society to join in its effort to create long-term, lasting, positive social change.

Barriers to social progress include the following:

- Lack of long-term sustainability of innovative programmes that work caused by
  - elaborate competitive tendering processes, resulting in lack of collaboration between services and institutions that tie up valuable resources for fund-raising
  - short-term funding of fads and pilot projects, without effective mechanisms for dissemination of innovative findings to inform policy nor any other appropriate follow-up mechanisms
  - lack of consistent and relevant evaluation and dissemination of what works, what doesn't and why—in an “information-overflow” age, relevant, accessible knowledge is more important than ever
- Faults in methodology and programme design, including
  - domination of one-sided approaches (psychological, sociological, socioeconomical) and associated issues at the expense of

integrated theories that deliver a social definition of development that focuses on relationships within communities as well as individual needs

shortage of responsive, client-driven (in other words “market place-driven”) service delivery designed around changing needs of young people consistent with the rapid changes in society

- Lack of relevant professional development and career opportunities, both at the tertiary level and continued skills development on the job
- Lack of evaluation of results for each person engaged in services and institutions; evaluation is often an “add-on” as opposed to an integrated activity designed together with clients and other key stakeholders
- Gaps in service provision

Australia has piloted a series of very successful projects that have moved away from centralised, inflexible service delivery to investment in customised, local community-developed solutions resulting in increased choices and offering a unique and welcome opportunity to reintroduce “the human factor” into an otherwise “sterile” service delivery system.

### *Success Factors of Programmes Working Toward and Delivering Social Progress*

Many committed professionals working in associations, politics, academia, independent initiatives, and projects have contributed to improving existing practice in service delivery for socially disadvantaged young people and their families.

Emerging good practice service delivery models include the following:

- The move from a deficit model to a positive approach to services and programmes aiming at inspiring young people to become

actively involved in shaping their own lives and future

- The move from service-centered to client-centered programme and service delivery, enabling the “client” to be actively involved in the design, implementation, and delivery of the “service” he or she participates in
- Recognition that one size does not fit all
- Recognition of the need to be proactive and preventive instead of reactive to problems
- Widespread recognition of the urgent need for, and implementation of, integrated and holistic service delivery through collaboration at all levels
- Increased recognition of decentralised community control of need assessments, design of appropriate policy, and programmes and project implementation
- Widespread recognition of the need for accountability for results, which goes hand in hand with data collection and dissemination of knowledge gained for benchmarking purposes

These factors affect the process, design, policies, implementation, and evaluation of results. They have shifted the focus evidenced by emerging theories, methodologies, and initiatives, including positive youth development and community participation—in particular, youth participation; the social entrepreneurs movement, in particular, social enterprise development; the move toward partnerships and collaborations between organisations and different sectors; and the Federal Government’s Youth Pathways Taskforce recommendations ([www.youthpathways.gov.au](http://www.youthpathways.gov.au)).

#### **BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RECENT TRENDS IN THE THIRD SECTOR RELEVANT TO PROGRAMMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES IN AUSTRALIA**

This section of the chapter is concerned with recent trends and their potential contribution to achieving long-term social change.

### ***Positive Youth Development and Participation***

A number of key studies, primarily in Europe and the USA, show that youth development is best achieved not by focussing on problems but by strengthening the capabilities of, opportunities for and supportive environments around young people. (Rajani, 2000, p. 1)

Positive youth development and meaningful youth participation are mutually inclusive. If programmes aimed at strengthening young people and their families are to be successful these two approaches have to form pillars from which all other activities flow. Youth participation and positive youth development will ensure that services are relevant to young people and their families. This is one of the core assumptions in this chapter, from which everything else follows, in particular successful replication strategies.

#### *Youth Participation*

Young people, as volunteers and partners with adults in decision making, are a considerable, largely untapped resource, representing a significant loss to the creation of solutions to these problems.

Although parents have the primary responsibility for the social, ethical, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of their children, programmes that support children and young people strengthen the ability of the family to raise healthy children, productive workers, and responsible citizens. Young people should be partners with adults in decision making that affects their lives. Many children and young people accept the responsibility of looking after their siblings or a parent who is mentally ill but receive no support from their community.

Successful and meaningful participation occurs at several levels, commencing with the design through programme implementation,

management and evaluation, and transfer of knowledge. The following participation “ladder,” developed by Roger Hart from the RMIT Youth Research Institute, Melbourne, Australia, illustrates how varied participation can be and provides a useful tool for projects to evaluate the degree of youth participation.

**Youth-initiated, shared decision-making with adults:**

Young people initiate and manage projects, share decision-making with adults, and use understanding adults with relevant skills as mentors and coaches;

**Youth-initiated and directed:**

Young people design, implement and manage their own projects with limited or no adult involvement;

**Adult-initiated, shared decision-making with youth:**

Adults initiate a project but share decision-making equally with young people. Young people are considered key stakeholders in the project;

**Youth consulted and informed:**

Projects are designed and run by adults, but young people understand the process, are consulted, and their opinions treated seriously;

**Youth assigned but informed:**

Projects are adult-initiated and run, but young people understand intentions, know who makes decisions and why, have a meaningful role, and participate in the project after they understand it;

**Tokenism:**

Projects are adult initiated and run. Young people may be consulted, but are not provided opportunities for feedback or to shape agenda. Adults may feign that young people are stakeholders;

**Decoration:**

Projects are adult initiated and run. Young people may have a limited understanding

about events or activities but have no say in organising;

**Manipulation:**

Projects are adult initiated and run. Young people have no understanding of issues behind actions, activities or events. Adults use young people, but do not consider them key stakeholders.

Due to the current popularity of youth participation, it is necessary to sift through the maze of youth participation projects to identify those that are meaningful and strategic in their approach. Rajani (2000) has developed the following list, which allows projects to measure what meaningful youth participation is.

It:

- Is voluntary and never forced
- Is inclusive, challenges stereotypes, and does not discriminate on the basis of sex, income, ethnicity, disability etc.
- Allows young people to participate to the maximum extent of their capacities
- Allows young people to initiate ideas and make decisions when they are capable of doing so
- Enables young people to be well informed and prepared for participation
- Respects and recognizes young people’s contributions and takes them seriously
- Is conducted in a language and manner that young people understand and feel comfortable with
- Has fair rules for participation and involves young people in making and/or reviewing the rules
- Is honest about its purposes/methods and transparent about what happens next
- Is flexible and sensitive to its context
- Is safe and free of violence
- Is connected with things that matter/are relevant to young people (p. 5)

Programmes developed on this basis have to be flexible to ensure *continuous* involvement of different participants to remain

relevant. This leads to individual interpretations and variations of project models, as individuals are empowered and encouraged to customize programmes to their specific need. This results in a variety of choices for participants. Furthermore, it is cost efficient, as need is targeted directly. No need, no service.

### *Positive Youth Development*

For many years, service delivery has been developed in response to problems and created a deficit model emphasising inadequacies and reinforcing negative stereotypes. This has led to stigmatising young people in the public perception as “troublemakers,” instead of creating opportunities for improvement or positive, acceptable role models. Positive youth development looks at broad developmental needs of young people in various stages of their lives instead of focussing on their “troublemaking” potential.

Positive youth development programmes follow characteristics of effective programs for replication outlined. Anecdotal evidence and common sense have been backed up by recent studies (Garbarino, 1995; Centre for Adolescent Health, 1997) providing evidence that participation in safe, structured, supervised, and healthy activities lead to young people become much less involved in the high-risk, unhealthy behaviors that can delay or derail positive development. These activities also build a broad range of relevant skills.

One of the best examples in Australia illustrating these claims is provided by the success of the “Melton Youth Access Audit” conducted in Melbourne, Victoria, in 1997. This project was commissioned by the Melton City Council and funded in partnership with the Foundation for Young Australians under its Social Belonging Grants Programme (White, 1998).

With 47% of residents under the age of 25 in 1997, Melton was a young person’s place. Concerns by residents about noise levels,

young people “hanging” around, and perceived offending behaviour were common. The Shire Council, however, was interested in influencing community opinion positively and negotiated with young people, resulting in the establishment of the Melton Youth Access Audit.

The innovative aspect of this project was the youth access audit team, consisting of 11 young people from the local area, most of whom were 15 years old. The access audit team surveyed 167 young people to gauge their idea of “youth friendliness” of places and suggestions for places to audit. This led to a survey of 70 local businesses and services requesting them to state what they considered friendly about their business and services regarding young people. After compiling the results of both surveys, the team developed a model youth access audit to standardize the process, which included questions and a ranking system for “youth friendliness.” The team then selected 25 places in Melton, including private and public space and shops and parks, and conducted the audits, evaluated the results, and provided feedback to businesses and relevant council members.

This project illustrates the strength of youth participation and positive youth development. The young people developed skills, expertise, and confidence. The community opinion of young people as troublemakers, in particular, in the local shopping center, was turned around. Businesses with low youth friendliness ratings requested advice from the team on how to improve their rating and implemented suggested changes. The young people were in control of the project, and solutions were therefore relevant and binding to those involved. The project also informed the community about young people’s needs and use of public space, and its results have been disseminated widely, informing national policy (White, 1998).

Consequently, positive youth development is a process preparing young people to meet the opportunities, challenges, and risks through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences, helping them to become socially, ethically, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent (Pittman, 1996).

Karen Pittman's groundbreaking work in this area in the United States points out that numerous organisations and commissions have defined generic sets of competencies that go beyond academic or cognitive competence to include vocational, physical, emotional, civic, social, and cultural competence. However, no developmental benchmarks have been developed to identify this fuller range of competencies. The education system provides many benchmarks to measure developmental success, yet in other areas of life we are less clear about stating our expectations, in particular, what goals society has for young people apart from school and work. This is as true in Australia as in the United States.

A lot of research was required to support the basic argument that services alone, particularly services that "treat problems" only, do not ensure development. Garbarino's (1995) research about resilience—young people who have beaten the odds—shows that somewhere in their lives they have a caring adult, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation.

Low-risk young people get orchestras, summer camps, accelerated learning opportunities and high-risk young people get substance abuse prevention counselling and other programmes. But until there is a challenge there is no reason for any person, young or old, to be sufficiently engaged to change. (Pittman, 1996, p. 5)

The challenge is to finally apply this good knowledge in practice.

### *Social Enterprises and the Social Entrepreneur Movement*

Of particular note in the context of policy and programme innovations is the recent establishment of the social entrepreneurs network and the increasing body of research evolving around social enterprises as a mechanism to achieve long-term sustainability of projects and to create meaningful employment for those who are currently excluded from the labour market. Peter Botsman (2001) defines social entrepreneurship as

the way in which small organisations and community activists "can make a difference" by drawing on private investment or by re-energising passive or stultifying government investment. (p. 2)

In the context of this chapter, the concept of social enterprises is particularly relevant. For many, the interest in social enterprises arose from very practical considerations. First, it is because youth unemployment is recognised as one of the most pressing social concerns in Australia today, and the establishment of social enterprises can generate employment for those who have experienced difficulties in gaining employment.

Second, the issue of long-term sustainability of services is at the forefront of concerns of third-sector leaders, and social enterprises offer potential independence from funders' interests in terms of policy development and practice.

We must start to reinvest a large percentage of the traditional social wage into social enterprises that are controlled by communities through new forms of democracy. I think we're moving away from the paternalistic, bureaucratic, the welfare state to the active, entrepreneurial, public and privately funded social enterprise state. The implication of this . . . is profound. It means that there is less room for paternalistic and pastoral advocates and more need for

people who have specific business, organisational skills, and knowledge, and who are capable of nurturing and creating new enterprises that will create a living wage for people who are currently missing out.” (Botsman, 2001, p. 3)

But social enterprises also offer an opportunity to combine knowledge and expertise from business and the third sector to design the ideal project of the future, which meets economic, social, and environmental goals.

There are many examples of social enterprises established in recent years as pilot projects, and evaluations that indicate elements for success include these:

- Healthy tripartite partnerships/relationships aiming to combine business, government, and community development expertise
- Positive and high expectations regarding young peoples’ abilities
- A commitment to tapping into young peoples’ capacity for innovation to create meaningful employment for themselves (e.g., involvement of young people in all stages of the design, development, and implementation of the project)
- Enthusiasm, passion, and a commitment to make the project work
- A viable business proposition
- Combination of the best business principles with community development principles/social concerns

One example for a social enterprise project meeting all of these elements is the “On the Rails” project located in Port Pirie, South Australia. The project is a partnership between the Port Pirie Regional Council and local businesses and receives financial support from the Myer Foundation, one of the largest Australian family grant-making foundations, based in Melbourne.

Port Pirie has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in regional Australia (38.7% pre-1999). The population is

decreasing in the two centres where On The Rails will be based: Port Pirie and Peterborough. There is an associated decline in the employment base as a result of industrial closures and downsizing. The high unemployment level and significant economic decline in the area means that there are few employment and training opportunities.

The programme targets those young people who experience homelessness or involvement with the juvenile justice system and are less likely to be competitive for the few jobs and traineeships that are available.

On the Rails is a training and employment project that also is income generating and therefore anticipated to be self-sustainable. The project involves two venues: (a) the Junction Express Eatery, which operates from the Port Pirie Tourism and Arts Centre and will cater for tourists and bus travellers who use the Centre, and (b) the nursery market garden that has been established in Peterborough. This is a hydroponic and organic market garden producing salad, vegetables, and flowers. The produce will be used in the eatery and sold to other businesses, including wholesalers, supermarkets, and restaurants.

The project has recruited more than 20 young people aged 15 to 21 on both sites since its inception in 2001, generated employment opportunities, and contributed to the local economy.

### *Partnerships*

Working together in partnerships has been celebrated as the new potential panacea to social problems. There are many different definitions of partnerships, and an Internet search reveals their enormous diversity and popularity. By and large, partnerships in the third sector refer to community organisations partnering with businesses for the common good.

A partnership does not refer simply to a financial obligation or donation. In fact, many highly effective partnerships do not involve financial commitment at all, existing instead on a basis of information sharing and learning between like-minded organisations or individuals.

*What Are the Ingredients for Successful Partnerships?*

Ideally, a partnership is based on mutual trust and understanding. It is a learning process, which relies on each partner expressing a willingness to accept the culture and operational context of the other partner, while maintaining identity and independence.

An effective partnership should be results oriented and should involve a long-term commitment to the key issue of mutual interest.

A partnership agreement should not be an end in itself. Partnerships evolve and develop over time and are reliant on the formulation of specific aims along with the development of effective strategies to address mutually agreed-on goals.

If all the preceding factors are in place, a partnership should result in improved cohesiveness and morale for the partners involved, as well as having wide-reaching positive effects on the issue that it aims to address.

Further evidence for the popularity of partnerships is the fact that in 1997, the Australian Prime Minister established a roundtable to investigate the potential of Business Community partnerships and the role government should play, which led to the establishment of the PM's Community Business Partnership (2000). One of the roles of this organisation is to provide a clearing-house for all aspects of information relating to community and business partnerships.

*Youth Pathways Taskforce*

This section summarises the relevant recommendations of the most recent federal

government strategies in regard to strengthening young people's participation in Australian society to complete the Australian policy context. The federal government established a number of significant task forces at the end of 1999, which evolved from previous task forces on homelessness and were chaired by community leaders and supported by a mix of business, community, university, and government members.

The Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce was requested to provide advice to the government in regard to a youth pathways action plan aimed at (a) improving support for young people and their families during young people's transition to independence (school to work) and (b) strengthening pathways for those young people who do not, or are not likely to, go straight from school for further education and training or full-time employment and those who are not fully engaged with their community.

The task force was requested to take into account the broad objectives of a youth pathways action plan, namely to strengthen existing pathways, in particular for young people at risk; improve early assistance prior to crisis point; reduce duration of crisis once it occurs; strengthen and support families' and communities' capacity to help young people; and find innovative ways to expand opportunities for young people to participate in economic and social life.

To execute its mandate, the task force consulted widely with the community and commissioned special research, which shaped the task force report, delivered early in 2001, in regard to the issues raised, the good practice models and innovative approaches proposed, and the 24 recommendations made.

Some of the task force recommendations are consistent with the analysis of success factors in project development in this chapter (which are based on both personal experience and a substantial literature review). They

may highlight the future directions of policy in Australia—if the federal government adopts these recommendations.

Central to the task force recommendations is a national commitment to provide all young people with the opportunity to complete 12 years of schooling or equivalent training and to undertake vocational education and training programme and structured workplace learning while at school and beyond; and if this is not possible, for other reasons in a young person's life, that community support services should be available to work through issues arising. Another elemental part of the national commitment is the provision of opportunities for young people to take part in cultural, recreational, sporting, and community service activities.

To realise this commitment, young people, families, schools, governments, business and communities will need to work together to recognise and act on their shared responsibility to equip young people for the future. (Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001, p. 3, Figure 2)

In the international context, 12 years of schooling or full-time vocational training is a long time in one persons' life. This illustrates that Australia belongs to one of the wealthier nations in the world, which accepts adolescence as a time to learn and play and not to work and earn money.

The task force also highlights the need for partnerships and recommends the establishment of

a national body comprising representatives of the Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local governments, young people, business, community service agencies and education providers to drive cultural change; identify and promote good practice in community building partnership building; and work with governments in establishing, monitoring and evaluating a national set of indicators on young people's participation in community life including their transition through school

and beyond. (Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001, p. 10)

The task force also repeated the call for more integration of service delivery at all levels and the establishment of a national database on effective youth programs. Partnerships between the federal, state and territory, and local governments must underpin all strategies to ensure success. This commitment by all levels of government to work together and effectively use resources, paid for by taxpayers, must be matched by a commitment at the local level to “deliver and integrate responses to young people which offers holistic support across community and government jurisdictions” (p. 15).

In addition, the task force states that the following issues require attention:

- Youth participation in policy and programs
- Government collaboration to enable peer-to-peer support
- Effective use of existing resources in schools
- Effective and appropriate professional development
- Development of clear and measurable outcome-oriented goals and indicators
- Incorporated reporting on outcomes in reports from schools and all other services for young people
- Regular public reporting developed on the status of young people at local, regional, state, and federal level

To the time of writing this chapter, the federal government had not allocated funds to implement the recommendations of the task force, and it will remain to be seen if this occurs. If it does, it could present a considerable opportunity to achieve social progress.

## REPLICATION OF SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

Knowledge about good practice brings with it a responsibility to find ways of expanding

projects that work and providing opportunities for “co-investment” or involvement by all potentially interested parties. A healthy society needs effective, working partnerships between the government, the corporate sector and the not-for-profit sector. It needs people who care within these organisations and who are willing to share their knowledge and thus enable replication of successful models.

Trusts and foundations and governments have invested in numerous innovative pilot and demonstration projects for several decades—but frequently the experience and knowledge has not been used effectively or at all. Although there is an acknowledged body of knowledge and extensive experience in the social sector, it is utterly underused.

The reasons for funding demonstration or pilot projects is to test and examine ideas, new theories, or variations to existing projects in the hope that they will deliver improved results. The reason behind this in the case of governments is that before the implementation of far-reaching changes to programmes governments need to try out innovations and examine whether they work to avoid mistakes that could lead to financial, resource, and possibly averse political repercussions.

Trust and foundations can be less risk-averse and invest in innovative schemes that often offer an opportunity to researchers to test their theories. However, more often than not, trusts and foundations do not plan for the financial commitment and the long-term sustained strategy required to ensure that successful projects can be taken to scale. In particular, many trusts and foundations do not engage in communication and advocacy strategies required to disseminate the findings of these projects widely.

Effective programme evaluation is essential to capture the lessons learned and avoid expensive repetition of experiments. It is also

important to identify at the outset what we consider to be successful outcomes and the information required for the replication, as this significantly affects the evaluation framework.

The issue of replication is crucial for demonstration projects. A demonstration project can only usefully inform policy and practice if its results are replicable. (Tilley, 1996, p. 35)

But most, if not all, evaluations of successful projects do not yet include issues that are essential for the replication of the project.

One exception is the Australian Hand Brake Turn project, which has specifically been funded to devise a strategic plan for its national replication (Curnow, Fletcher, & Sampson, 1998). The first HBT project was seed-funded in 1994 and quickly demonstrated its success. Hand Brake Turn consists of a structured 10-week program for 15- to 20-year-old young men and women who have been involved with the juvenile justice system. Within the environment of a mechanical workshop, the program offers young people “hands on” training in motor mechanics, spray painting and panel beating, detailing, workshop safety driver education, literacy, numeracy, and communication skills. Accredited education is a vital component of the project. The program also offers vocational support to young people, such as work experience, interviews, preparing resumes, and links to employment and further education.

Hand Brake Turn is a response to two major community challenges—youth unemployment and youth crime (particularly motor vehicle theft). The project seeks to provide practical training, personal support, and pathways to further training and/or employment for young people. It also attempts to break the unemployment cycle and the reoffending cycle of these young

people, preventing them from becoming involved or further entrenched in the juvenile justice system.

The Strategic Plan for the replication and expansion of the Hand Brake Turn Program includes a strategy incorporating needs analysis of current and potential locations; auspice options; financial analysis and implementation strategy; and an Implementation Marketing Kit incorporating a strategy and tools to attract and retain corporate, government, and community sponsorship for existing and proposed programmes. The Human Resource Kit includes a staff orientation manual, a personnel policy manual, and a staff support manual. A Training Kit includes a review and compilation of precourse information, client workbooks, handouts, and curriculum summaries.

During the 6 years after the first project had commenced, several successful project sites were closed due to changes in government funding policies, and others started responding to funding opportunities and need. The strategic replication strategy was commissioned and delivered in the third quarter of 2000. Yet, as of November 2001, the project had not been replicated nationally. The failure to replicate this extremely successful programme is an unfortunate example of inefficiencies within the system—particularly for holistically oriented projects, as these tend to fall “between the cracks” of funding policies.

There is one other important reason that this project has not been replicated nationally. Largely, the responsibility of “making it happen” lies with the project itself. As mentioned earlier, social progress needs the commitment of all sectors of society, and the responsibility for replication lies not with project managers in the third sector alone. It is not enough simply to make funding commitments.

## THE WAY FORWARD

Prior to reflecting on the future direction of policy and project development, it is helpful to summarise the key points:

- The third sector is very important, economically as well as socially, to a greater extent than has been recognised in the past.
- International and national good practice have influenced Australian policy and project development regarding programmes working with and for children and young people.
- Positive youth development is an important reminder that we need to build on strengths as well as addressing problems.
- Young people must participate in meaningful and strategic ways in decision making with adults to fully use their potential contribution to society and to ensure ownership of the society in which we live
- Partnerships and collaboration between different organisations and different sectors of society have been recognised as a means to achieve social progress.
- Replication of projects meeting good practice standards is difficult, due to funding allocation being based on single issues and problems rather than integrated, holistic projects.

The failure of the current mainstream system of service delivery, complemented by special needs projects, to provide a social and economical safety net for all Australians can be overcome. The Australian social welfare system has been recognised internationally as good practice, often even exceeding international minimum standards. However, it is totally unacceptable that a “good” welfare system fails to deliver results for the country’s most vulnerable groups.

We need to create a mainstream system that meets the needs of all people, including those who are disadvantaged at any point in time. The effectiveness of this service delivery system has to be measured by the outcome achieved for the most vulnerable participants.

We need to broaden our goals from simply achieving competency in school and work to achieving social goals such as connectedness and character, and we need to support the process to get there. What good is it to educate the world's best-skilled doctors if they are socially disconnected and use their skills in a way that is not furthering the overall interests of the community?

The different sectors of society need to be integrated and use the best that business, government, and the third sector have to offer to create solutions to social problems in the 21st century. The social entrepreneurs movement and venture capitalism in philanthropy hold some promise—because both trends focus on the capacity of the individual to create relationships to strengthen communities, families, and neighbourhoods instead of focussing on single-issue programmes. In

addition, both the social entrepreneur and the venture capitalist invest in people and don't give to charity. This entails the application of venture capital principles to giving, which means, among other things, defining results by measuring "return on investments." This demands sophisticated collaboration between donors and social sector organisations. It also introduces business methods to social issues.

This has to be complemented by a public debate about the nature of the society we currently live in, the role all sectors play and can or could play within this society, and the nature of the society in which we wish to live. In short, it is necessary to engage the entire community.

It is individuals that change societies, who give birth to ideas, who by standing out against the tides of opinion, change them.  
(Doris Lessing)

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