

# Building Socially Inclusive Rural Communities: A complete resource





# Rural Social Inclusion: The Resource

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# Acknowledgements

## **Acknowledgement of Country:**

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which this resource was produced, their rich culture and spiritual connection to Country. We acknowledge that their forebears are the traditional owners of the area and have been custodians for many centuries performing age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of the Loddon Mallee region of Victoria.

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The Rural Social Inclusion Resource is a joint initiative of the Primary Care Partnerships of the Loddon Mallee Region of Victoria. We would also like to thank our communities for sharing their stories and experiences which have informed the development of this resource.





# Welcome

This evidence-based resource provides information and guidance for action towards building socially inclusive rural communities. It is designed to be used by organisations, projects, programs and partnerships that are working to address the health and wellbeing of rural communities.

Its main purpose is to introduce discussion of rural social inclusion into the planning, implementation and evaluation processes of these entities.

## WHAT THE EVIDENCE TELLS US

Although Australia is prosperous and faring well in comparison to other nations in the world, there still remains a widening inequality in which rural people are disproportionately impacted. The literature argues that the ability to participate in society, and to be free from discrimination and disadvantage is a basic human right, providing a mandate for action. It is in the national interest to address social inclusion as there are links to productivity, economic development and participation in the workforce. However, the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of social inclusion challenges policy makers and practitioners to make an impact on the most disadvantaged populations in the community.

There is evidence that effectively engaging the community, building community capacity, mobilising social capital, embracing diversity and facilitating community empowerment may break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage and address social exclusion. Joined-up responses recognise the multi-dimensional nature of social inclusion whilst affording a significant focus on prevention and early intervention strategies.

## THE RURAL CONTEXT

Rural communities offer an alternative lifestyle to metropolitan and larger regional population centres. For many people rural communities are an enjoyable place to be where their education and employment needs are accommodated and their participation in the community supports and fulfils a sense of belonging (inclusion).

Yet evidence tells us that rural communities do disproportionately experience barriers to social inclusion including poorer access to housing, transport and support services. Residents of rural communities generally have lower incomes, higher unemployment and a decreased life expectancy.

While this may not significantly impact all people in rural communities it can result in greater inequities within them, giving more power to those already privileged. Reinforcing these traditional power centres discourages diversity and leads to greater social exclusion.

The Rural Social Inclusion Resource applies this evidence and recognises and responds to differences in the processes of inclusion and exclusion in a rural context.



# How to use the Rural Social Inclusion Resource

This resource can be used to introduce discussion of rural social inclusion into planning, delivery and evaluation processes within organisations, projects, programs and partnerships. It has been designed for a diverse professional audience and is therefore divided into key sections so readers' can find the information that is most relevant to them.

Five key principles have been identified that promote and support rural social inclusion. Building these five actions into our plans, policies and everyday work will act to increase rural social inclusion and they form the basis of this resource:

## **1. ENGAGE** – invite. listen. involve. facilitate.

Community engagement to involve everyone in the decisions that affect them and facilitate participation in finding their own solutions.

## **2. EMPOWER** – learn. strengthen. encourage. participate.

Embrace knowledge, skills and confidence of individuals and communities, strengthen resources and influence towards empowerment and self-determination.

## **3. UNITE** – together. build. harness. enhance.

Build and enhance collective action and cooperation for mutual benefit and increased social capital.

## **4. ACCEPT** – understand. respect. adapt. celebrate.

Genuine relationships built with trust, acceptance and understanding of diversity, cultures, beliefs and history.

## **5. CHANGE** – collaborate. integrate. systemic. include.

Collaborative 'joined-up' approaches that link and change systems, sectors and structures that promotes the inclusion of individuals and communities in genuine participation.

An appropriate mix of strategies and interventions from the five key principles will have the greatest impact in ensuring strong socially inclusive rural communities.

# How to use the Rural Social Inclusion Resource

## FOUNDATIONS OF RURAL SOCIAL INCLUSION

This section provides an overview of the literature and a foundation for the concepts that have been used to inform and guide the development of the Rural Social Inclusion Resource. Refer to *Rural Social Inclusion: The Evidence* for more comprehensive information supporting this framework and resource.

Refer to *Rural Social Inclusion: The Evidence* ([www.centralvicpcp.com.au/social-inclusion](http://www.centralvicpcp.com.au/social-inclusion)) for more comprehensive information supporting this framework and resource

## THE FRAMEWORK

The Framework presents and summarises the key ideas related to rural social inclusion visually, to guide understanding of the many factors that influence social inclusion within a rural context. The aim of the framework is to introduce a social inclusion lens without it becoming a complex activity.

## PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

This section provides examples of action for each of the five key principles. Case studies are also included for a more in depth demonstration of how these principles can be put into practise.

## TOOLS

The Audit Tool is designed to review whether rural social inclusion has been considered during planning, implementation and/or evaluation processes. The audit tool can be applied retrospectively or prospectively to determine whether rural social inclusion was, is or will be, adequately addressed.

The Planning Prompts are designed to stimulate the consideration of social inclusion during general planning.

## EVALUATING SOCIAL INCLUSION

This section provides direction on evaluating the short, medium and long term impacts of strategies that aim to build socially inclusive rural communities. The range of actions that could result from the use of this resource are so broad that this information should be used only as a guide to evaluating rural social inclusion. In particular, this resource can help to guide evaluation in relation to the five principles, engage, empower, unite, accept and change.

## WHEN TO USE

By using the resource, each organisation, project, program and/or partnership will be able to consider rural social inclusion at all stages:

**BEFORE:** To aid in planning with a clear social inclusion focus to reduce potential barriers to participation and access.

**DURING:** To enhance and reorient activity to better meet the needs of sub-populations facing the greatest exclusion.

**AFTER:** To critically reflect on the effectiveness in addressing social exclusion or to evaluate the impact on marginalised/disadvantaged communities.



# Foundations of Rural Social Inclusion

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# Foundations of Rural Social Inclusion

## SOCIAL INCLUSION OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION?

The ability to participate in society, and to be free from discrimination and disadvantage is not only an ideal, it is a basic human right. It is a right documented in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, agreed by the international community in 1948. The definition used by the UNESCO (2012) highlights the value of human rights in a socially inclusive society:

*'Inclusive society is defined as a society for all, in which every individual has an active role to play. Such a society is based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity.'*

Throughout the literature social inclusion and social exclusion concepts are examined together and are often referred to as 'twin' concepts. Thus, an understanding of social exclusion is essential in order to promote social inclusion (Labonte, 2004).

*Social exclusion involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole (Levitas et al., 2007).*

Generally, social exclusion describes what occurs when individuals or communities experience multiple disadvantages simultaneously, making it difficult for them to participate in their community, for example in work, education or in joining a community group (Social Inclusion Unit, 2008).

Socially inclusive rural communities are those in which:

- Every individual is able to feel welcome in their community and have the opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of rural community life;
- The systems and structures in communities and in organisations enable the voice of local community to guide action;
- Genuine community leadership is active and effective.





## VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

The literature indicates that people most at risk of social exclusion are those who experience multiple and complex problems (financial, social, physical and psychosocial). Multiple disadvantages can have a compounding and persistent effect, reinforcing barriers to achieving wellbeing, accessing resources and utilising capabilities (UK Social Exclusion Task Force, 2007; Vale, Watts, & Franklin, 2009).

At a personal level, people experiencing multiple disadvantages often experience increased mental health issues, higher levels of domestic violence and other criminal and antisocial behaviour, have lower levels of educational attainment and employment, inadequate income that results in diminished access to affordable and appropriate housing and transport, and increased geographic and/or social isolation (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2007).

Social exclusion also tends to cluster at certain points across the lifecycle, for instance when people experience a change in their role, status or in expectations and responsibilities. Critical transitions include early childhood and going to school for the first time; the transition to adulthood; leaving school or university (particularly early leavers); moving out of the family home; becoming a parent; becoming unemployed; retirement; and leaving prison, hospitals or hostels, especially after a significant length of time or period of 'cycling in and out' of tertiary care. At these times, people can be more vulnerable in their relationships, in their physical, mental and emotional resources and have a weakened ability to adapt to their changing needs (Chi-Wai Lui et al., 2011; Roeher Institute, 2003; and Bradshaw et al., 2004). Communities, groups and towns can also be in transition and experience multiple and complex problems.

Organisations and local government councils generally identify vulnerable populations using demographic definitions (Brackertz, 2007). The most commonly identified population groups most at risk of social exclusion include:

- those with limited employment opportunities, particularly women,
- culturally and linguistically diverse groups,
- refugees,
- gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex community
- female and male sex workers,
- people living with disabilities,
- people living with drug addiction,
- people living with chronic illness (including mental ill-health),
- the long term unemployed/underemployed,
- people who are homeless,
- young people (especially early school leavers) and
- older people (especially those living on pensions).

(ACT Council of Social Service, 2011a; Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2012; Government of South Australia, n.d.; Levitas et al, 2007)

The Australian Social Inclusion Board (2012) identified particular population groups that are currently experiencing multiple disadvantage. These include low income, unemployed, homeless, children, Aboriginal people, CALD and people with disability. In Victoria there is also a focus on the older population in relation to social exclusion and social isolation.

# Foundations of Rural Social Inclusion

## THE RURAL CONTEXT

Nearly one in three people live outside Australian major cities - in rural, regional and remote areas across Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2008). The main characteristics that differentiate between rural and urban communities are physical geographical isolation and smaller sized populations. Another critical difference is the level of disadvantage and poverty (Australian Council of Social Services, 2013). Rural areas are over represented among the disadvantaged according to indicators of disadvantage (ABS, 2000). As the level of inequality increases in Australia, rural people are disproportionately impacted (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2012).

There are many differences in the social, economic, and cultural features of rural areas, as well as the physical difference in accessibility, that are likely to influence the process of social exclusion in these areas (Shucksmith, 2003). Factors particularly affecting rural communities are multidimensional and include: agricultural and trade policy reforms; demographic change and migration patterns; house prices; labour and skills shortages, restricted careers, access to information technologies; depletion of fossil fuels, climate change and reduced government involvement in service provision (Alston, 2005; Rawsthorne, 2009; Shucksmith & Arkleton 2000)

Many of these factors have led to both population decline and a higher proportion of elderly residents in many rural areas in recent years. In the contexts of close-knit rural towns dominated by family farms, these shifting socio-demographic profiles can confront the identity, values and connections of communities.

In rural communities, smaller populations mean that there are fewer people to inform decision-making or initiate action. Access to community influence and benefits is dependent on becoming a privileged or elite community member through family tenure or wealth and status (Alexander, 2005). This results in the privileged community influencing decisions on the entitlement, allocation, and timing of community resources, leading to greater exclusion for those

without power or influence (Onyx et al., 2007; Ostrom, 2000; Wilson, 2005).

Much has been written about the 'digital divide' and its impact on those affected. It refers to the perceived gap between those who have access to the latest information technologies and those who do not. Research tells us that there is a range of factors that contribute to this digital divide along racial, economic, ethnic, and educational lines (Charleson, 2012). There is also geographical divide, where access to the internet is considerably lower in regional and remote areas compared to major cities. In addition, Regional and remote areas are at least 40% less likely to have Broadband access relative to major cities (ABS, 2007).

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Community engagement is not a new concept; it is about involving everybody in making decisions that affect them. A community engagement approach aims to improve services by being responsive to the needs of communities and helping people to find their own solutions to local problems (Government of South Australia 2011). Yet, in 2010, nearly half of Australians aged 18 years and over reported to have difficulty in having a say in community issues (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2012).

Successful and sustainable community participation requires community consultation and engagement. Effective consumer consultation creates transparency and a sense of trust, ownership and facilitates commitment (Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government, 2005). Determining who is representative of the community is a complex and sometimes contentious issue, particularly where a small group is taken to represent a larger population (Brackertz, 2007). It is important to include the voices of the disadvantaged but it is also important to ensure equity and incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to ensure democratic legitimacy (Foot, 2009). Engaging the community may require creative thinking, a network of local contacts and



the development of local understandings (Wilkinson, Stockl, Taggart, & Franks, 2009).

## EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is a key theme throughout the literature on social inclusion, in some instances referred to as self-determination. Most importantly it refers to the capacity of individuals and communities to get what they want or need; and to influence others effectively to further their own interests (Baum et al., 2000).

In an attempt to move from top-down frameworks of imposed development models, empowerment places the emphasis on local people, local contexts, and local forms of power and change. This is not to say that there is no element of top-down facilitation and pressure involved, indeed top-down stimulus can facilitate bottom-up rural development (Sobels, Curtis, & Lockie, 2001).

## SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital is a term used to describe the particular features of social relationships within a group or community that facilitate collective cooperative behaviour (D. Johnson et al., 2005; Stone, 2001). This includes such things as the extent of trust and respect between people; whether they have a shared understanding of how they should behave toward and care for one another (mutual obligation); and the extent of participation in civic organisations, such as sporting clubs and school councils (Kawachi & Berkman, 2000; VicHealth, 2005).

Social capital is seen as a meaningful measure of community strength and a means of reversing community decline. To understand, measure and increase social capital, it is necessary to recognize the multi-dimensional nature of its sources. The most common types of social capital have been identified:

- Bonding capital, which refers to the relationships and bonds among close family members, friends and neighbours;
- Bridging capital, which refers to the weaker ties that are formed among distant friends, acquaintances, colleagues and associates; and
- Linking capital, which refers to the connections between institutions and members of a community, or between groups with different levels of power and social status (Putnam, 2001; Woolcock, 2001).



# Foundations of Rural Social Inclusion

## JOINED UP APPROACH

It is generally agreed that given the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of social inclusion, multi-faceted, 'joined-up' responses are required to make a difference (Victorian State Government, 2007). Numerous phrases are used in the literature to describe 'joined up' approaches. These include 'multi-agency', 'service coordination', 'working in partnership', 'holistic approach', 'whole of government', 'Open Method of Co-ordination' and 'integrated services' (Tasmanian Government, 2009; Victorian State Government, 2007; Zeitlin, 2005). Governments are recognizing that traditional silo based government structures cannot address the complexities of social inclusion in isolation (Tasmanian Government, 2009).

## COLLECTIVE ACTION

The community is more powerful when they work together rather than in isolation, to improve the quality of their lives. Collective action involves a group of people that voluntarily engage in a common action to pursue a shared interest (Meinzen-Dick, Di Gregorio, & McCarthy, 2004). Collective action can take many forms including resource mobilisation, activity coordination, information sharing or the development of institutions (Poteete & Ostrom, 2003).

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND COMPETENCY

Australia has a rich and culturally diverse population. In 2009, about a quarter of the estimated resident population comprised of those born overseas (Australian Government, 2012). Within the framework of Australia's laws, all Australians have the right to express their culture and beliefs and to participate freely in Australia's national life (Australian Government, 2012). However, research tells us that one in two people from non-English speaking backgrounds are likely to be subject to discrimination during their lifetime (Markus & Dharmalingam, 2007). In addition, studies have demonstrated a correlation between discrimination and social exclusion (Kabeer, 2000).

Cultural competence is a key consideration to ensure cultural diversity is integrated into social inclusion agendas and initiatives (Hayter, 2009). This may require attention particularly in rural communities where there is less trust and tolerance of people outside the community and resistant to social diversity (Onyx et al., 2007; Stone, 2001).

For more comprehensive information supporting this framework and resource, please refer to Rural Social Inclusion: The Evidence ([www.centralvicpcp.com.au/social-inclusion](http://www.centralvicpcp.com.au/social-inclusion))





# Rural Social Inclusion Framework

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# RURAL SOCIAL INCLUSION FRAMEWORK

Socially inclusive rural communities are those in which every individual is able to feel welcome in their community and have the opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of rural community life.

## KEY DETERMINANTS AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

### Social Determinants

- Employment • Education
- Housing • Participation in leisure/social activities • Access to health services, security/welfare support and community services

### Life stages

- Early childhood
- Adolescents
- Adulthood
- Older age

### Life changes

- Commencing and or leaving school • Moving out of the family home • Becoming a parent • Becoming unemployed
- Retirement • Leaving prison, hospitals or hostels

## VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Rural communities disproportionately experience barriers to social inclusion including poorer access to housing, transport and support services therefore this can be exacerbated in people who are most at risk of social exclusion due to experiencing multiple and complex problems – Financial, Social, Physical, Psychosocial.

**Populations most vulnerable to or at risk of social exclusion include:**

### People

- With a disability • Who are homeless • Who are older (especially pensioners) • Refugees • With a drug addiction • In temporary accommodation
- Early school leavers • Sex workers
- With chronic illness • Long term unemployed/under employed
- Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender

### Groups

- Racial & ethnic minorities
- Religious

### In Places

- With limited employment opportunities (particularly women)

## PARTNERS FOR ACTION

- Community
- Organisations
- Communities of Place
- Disability • Education
- Employment • Government
- Health • Housing
- Justice • Welfare

## LONG TERM BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES



## PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

### ENGAGE

- invite • listen •
- involve • facilitate •

Community engagement to involve everyone in the decisions that affect them and facilitate finding their own solutions

### CHANGE

- collaborate • integrate •
- systemic • include •

'Joined-up' approaches that link and change systems, sectors and structures that promotes the inclusion of individuals and communities in genuine participation.

### EMPOWER

- learn • strengthen •
- encourage • participate •

Embrace knowledge, skills and confidence of individual and communities, strengthen resources and influence towards empowerment and self-determination

### ACCEPT

- understand • respect •
- adapt • celebrate •

Genuine relationships built with trust, acceptance and understanding of diversity, cultures, beliefs and history

### UNITE

- together • build •
- harness • enhance •

Build and enhance collective action and cooperation for mutual benefit and increased social capital

### Societal

- Equitable access to opportunities and resources
- Freedom from discrimination
- Devolution of power to communities • Improved productivity

### Community

- All people feel welcome in their community and they are able to fully participate in all aspects of rural life • Participation of communities in decision making
- Community sees strengths in its differences and diversity

### Organisational

- Individuals experiences and data is used in planning and decision making processes
- Effective evidence based programs are delivered that foster inclusion • Being responsive to community issues and characteristics and able to prioritise activity
- Open transparent inclusive communication

### Individual

- Socially connected
- Strong self esteem and pride
- Increased health and wellbeing
- Control over own health
- Increased sense of belonging

# Using the Rural Social Inclusion Framework

The Framework presents and summarises the key ideas related to rural social inclusion in a single page format to guide understanding of the many factors that can influence social inclusion within a rural context. The aim of the framework is to introduce a social inclusion lens to planning, implementation and evaluation processes without it becoming a complex activity.

The elements of the Rural Social Inclusion Framework are interconnected and therefore action in one area will impact on another. It is important that this is considered in using the framework to guide action. As a result, there is no one way to use the framework, it has simply been designed to provide starting points for action.

## RURAL SOCIAL INCLUSION CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

### **Social Exclusion**

Social exclusion describes what occurs when individuals or communities experience multiple disadvantages simultaneously, making it difficult for them to participate in their community.

### **Key determinants and contributing factors**

This section identifies the social determinants of health (key determinants) that contribute to social exclusion. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines the social determinants of health as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. Contributing factors such as particular life stages and life changes have also been identified.

### **Vulnerable Populations**

In society there are individuals, groups and in some instances places that have a higher risk or are more vulnerable to poorer health. This section highlights those groups particularly vulnerable to rural social exclusion.

### **Partners for action**

Partners for action may involve settings, sectors, communities or organisations that can reach and implement change with those most vulnerable to rural social exclusion.

### **Principles of action**

Five key principles have been identified to promote and support rural social inclusion. Building these five actions into our plans, policies and everyday work will act to increase rural social inclusion.

### **Long term benefits and outcomes**

Long term benefits and outcomes are the result of changes in the determinants of health and provide examples of what can be achieved by addressing rural social exclusion.



# Principles into Practice

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# Principles into Practice

This section provides information and ideas for translating the evidence and principles of Rural Social Inclusion into actions that people can understand and apply. There is very little existing peer-reviewed evidence of interventions addressing rural social exclusion, especially in the Australian context. However we have gathered the following information and success stories from our own communities in Central and Northern Victoria which provides a great starting point for you to apply this framework to promote rural social inclusion.

## BEFORE YOU START...

Before commencing work within our communities it is worth considering a few “assumptions” made with this resource. These are particularly relevant in the rural setting.

It is assumed that:

- You understand and adopt the philosophy of this framework that initiatives will be delivered “with” communities, not “to”;
- You know the “lie of the land” and are aware of what has happened in the past and the experiences of those who have come before you;
- You have “peeled the onion” to unpack and understand what is really happening within a community;
- Multiple sources of data and information has informed you.

## FIVE KEY PRINCIPLES OF RURAL SOCIAL INCLUSION

The rural social inclusion framework identifies five key principles to promote and support rural social inclusion. Case studies are used here to highlight these principles and as you will see, most case studies involve more than one principle. This highlights that action to address rural social inclusion should incorporate multiple principles for the highest chance of success.

Building these five actions into our plans, policies and everyday work will act to increase rural social inclusion.

The following pages provide examples of how to address the factors contributing to rural social exclusion and we encourage the use of multiple strategies from the following health promotion action areas:

- Build healthy public policy
- Create supportive environments
- Strengthen community actions and increase community capacity to empower the individual
- Develop personal skills
- Re-orient services towards prevention and a shared responsibility for health
- Advocate and communicate
- Consolidate and expand partnerships.

## ENGAGE – invite. listen. involve. facilitate.

Community engagement to involve and empower everyone in the decisions that affect them and facilitate finding their own solutions.

Community engagement is not a new concept; it is about involving everybody in making decisions that affect them. A community engagement approach aims to improve services by being responsive to the needs of communities and helping people to find their own solutions to local problems (Government of South Australia 2011).

It is important to identify the facilitators to engagement; this includes identifying what people in a community are passionate about, what they feel the community issues are and how they might be interested in being involved.

### EXAMPLES OF ACTION:

- Provide individuals with the accessible and culturally appropriate information, education and training to enable them to participate in decision making processes e.g. Support a new consumer representative to understand meeting processes, build their confidence and motivation, decipher the jargon and ensure they receive opportunities for mentoring and debriefing;
- Undertake a process to identify community strengths or barriers to participation and be flexible e.g. Take the time to engage with communities in ways that are comfortable to them and make a commitment to reach beyond the people that are usually consulted;
- Implementation of multiple methods of communicating with community to gather evidence and provide feedback e.g. social media, farm gate visits, shopfronts in commercial centres.
- Increase organisational understanding of communities acknowledging that within communities there may be a number of different communities of interest e.g. young people, differing sexual orientations, diverse cultural groups. A diversity of views can lead to a new understanding of the situation and the identification of opportunities for action that may not have otherwise occurred.
- Engage community members in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services to help ensure they are culturally appropriate and effective.



## CASE STUDY

# LOCAL WOMEN SOLVING LOCAL HEALTH ISSUES AROUND THE TABLE

### **Generating discussions between local women and organisations within the northern Loddon district has encouraged women to voice their opinions regarding their health needs.**

The Around the Table project also set out to build stronger communities, while identifying and prioritising actions for women's health in the district.

The project originated from a meeting between Boort District Health, Northern District Community Health Service and Women's Health Loddon Mallee to discuss gaps in women's health services delivery. Pyramid Hill Neighbourhood House was also involved in the early discussions around the project.

Around the Table set out to engage women from the very start, recognising that local women's involvement was crucial to identifying health issues within the area. Ensuring women felt comfortable expressing their opinions was also essential to the project.

To address this, local Chat Queens were used to bring together their social groups, including friends, neighbours or colleagues and encourage discussions around local women's health.

Through the Chat Queens, opinions and ideas were gained from a wide range of women, including professional women in townships and young mothers on outlying farms. The Chat Queens also had access to a variety of groups, from residents at the Boort Hostel to Year 10 students at Pyramid College.

As well as encouraging women to take time out to consider their own health and well-being, Around the Table also identified areas of potential stress and future health problems. This resulted in actions that could be taken to address the region's future health needs.

The project also provided the opportunity for young people to be heard as equals and also recognised that action plans within the region had to address different needs, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Around the Table also identified the vital role of organisations within the region, including improving access to services, informing women what services are available to them and encouraging women to be involved in their community.

Outcomes from the project, which is ongoing, include the development of a volunteer program at Pyramid Hill Neighbourhood House, investigation into a community garden for Pyramid Hill, identifying the need for a female GP in Boort and establishing a Pyramid Hill physical activity group.

The Around the Table project is a partnership between Boort District Health, Pyramid Neighbourhood House, Loddon Mallee Women's Health and Northern District Community Health Service.

The project was also made possible through a grant from the Helen McPherson Smith Trust.



## CASE STUDY

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CHARTER GIVES YOUNG PEOPLE A VOICE

**The Mount Alexander Youth Engagement Charter is giving young people living in the municipality a chance to be heard when it comes to community consultation.**

Researched, developed and written by the Mount Alexander Youth Advisory Group, the charter helps Council better engage with young people when it comes to decision making.

Adopted in September 2012, the charter commits Council to engaging and consulting with young people, and include their feedback around planning, policy, advocacy and services. It also provides tools and guidelines to engage with youth.

Based around four pillars – listen, facilitate, consider and engage, the document includes 11 key principles, which were written by young people. These have been matched with 11 commitment statements, developed in collaboration by Council staff and youth.

Last year, these charter principles were used when Mount Alexander Shire Council was planning community consultation around the redevelopment of the outdoor pool.

“The Youth Advisory Group were initially consulted and advised Council against consulting young people exclusively via social media,” Council’s Youth Development Officer Shannon Lacy said.

“Instead, they recommended that Council distribute a hard copy survey to students at Castlemaine Secondary College through their home groups. Council followed this advice and with the support of the Youth Advisory Group, around 250 surveys were completed.”

The Mount Alexander Shire Youth Engagement Charter development was funded by the Victorian Government’s Rural and Regional Youth Inclusion Grant Program, part of its Youth Action Strategy.

This strategy has identified that young people who feel more connected to their communities – particularly in regional and rural areas, are more likely to stay in these areas or return to them.







## EMPOWER – learn. strengthen. encourage. participate.

Build knowledge, skills and confidence of individuals and communities, strengthen resources and influence towards empowerment and self-determination.

Empowerment refers to the capacity of individuals and communities to get what they want or need; and to influence others effectively to further their own interests (Baum, 2002). Baum et al. (2000) also argue that empowerment is determined in part by the extent to which people participate in activities outside their immediate work and home lives. An approach based around participation assumes that people have a need and a right to participate in society and not just the workforce (rather than to simply 'be included'), and that, where necessary, resources should be provided to facilitate this participation.

### EXAMPLES OF ACTION:

- Provide individuals with quality, accessible and culturally appropriate information, education and training to address individual barriers to participation e.g. How to access Centrelink payments; How to talk with your children's teachers, Employment support;
- Support people to access available services and resources e.g. Facilitate referral to mothers group, support financial literacy, promote community kitchens and gardens;
- Implement activities that build individual and community capacity to participate in decision-making processes. Don't simply invite a representative to participate in decision making processes, discuss why it would be of benefit to them, or their community, and ensure that those expectations are realistic and achievable. Ask what information, skills and support would make them more comfortable in the role;
- Implement processes to increase involvement and empowerment of relatively less influential groups in decision making e.g. bringing people together in non-threatening environments such as playgroups or schools, progressively increasing their decision making as their confidence grows;
- Leadership development activities e.g. Community leadership program that increases confidence and skills; building leadership opportunities into community programs and activities; mentoring;
- School programs that ease students transitions in starting and finishing school;
- Authentic youth participation and leadership.





## CASE STUDY

# MEETING PLACE BRINGING ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TOGETHER

**A program bringing together Aboriginal children and families for special activities to teach and celebrate Aboriginal culture is being hailed a great success.**

The Meeting Place provides opportunities for Indigenous young people to celebrate local cultures and identities, and to explore their culture through the arts, traditions and interaction with Elders and other relationships.

The initiative, which is held on Fridays at Old Yapeen Primary School, started in 2012, with Aboriginal children from schools across the Mount Alexander district participating in the special program.

As well as celebrating local cultures and identities, the program also sets out to increase understanding among the wider community of the issues and struggles for Aboriginal youth in the Castlemaine area.

It also aims to improve Indigenous young people's self-esteem, increase positive images of Indigenous culture and interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people.

Jaara Jaara Elders are consulted with and included at all times, while, with permission from Jaara Jaara Elders, Elders from other areas are invited to be involved and share their culture.

Castlemaine District Community Health's Cath Butler said the children are enjoying coming together to meet others, which helps cultural togetherness.

"The children are growing in confidence as the program progresses. The initiative also supports and encourages healthy eating and physical activity. Some parents and volunteers are also helping with the program to ensure its success," she said.

All the program's activities have a cultural perspective wherever possible, including traditional games, Indigenous foods and contemporary discussion. Children also provide input into the activities, while volunteers are encouraged to share their expertise. Specialist agencies are also integrated into The Meeting Place in a non-threatening way, where

As well as celebrating local cultures and identities, the program also sets out to increase understanding among the wider community of the issues and struggles for Aboriginal youth in the Castlemaine area.

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they mix and play with the children, rather than lecturing environment.

In May 2014, The Meeting Place produced its first book of local teachings.

The book "Tarrengower and Lalbambook" is based on the teaching of the Jaara Jaara and has been illustrated in local ochres by the children of The Meeting Place. The book project was funded by The Mount Alexander Shire Council.

"The children have participated in the development of the book and are very proud of the outcome," Volunteer Coordinator of The Meeting Place Julie McHale said. "They have learnt so much and their paintings are fantastic."

The Meeting Place is a partnership of Mount Alexander LGA agencies who work to support and initiate activities for Aboriginal children and families.

Partners include Castlemaine District Community Health, Castlemaine Secondary College, Mount Alexander Shire Council, Loddon Mallee Murray Medicare Local, Castlemaine Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives. The Central Victorian Primary Care Partnership also funded the group to provide a fortnightly program for Aboriginal children.



## CASE STUDY

# LAKES DISTRICT COOKS UP A STORM

**What set out as a project to encourage healthy eating and food preparation skills, has turned into a lively, monthly social event where community members can meet, talk, learn new skills and enjoy a home-cooked meal together.**

Since it was established in 2009, Cooking Up a Storm Lakes District has grown into a fully self-sufficient, sustaining and community-based project, which continues as a monthly meeting of cooking and discussion.

The project, which encourages everyone to participate in the sessions – no matter their level of cooking skills, has seen its members develop a strong camaraderie and connection. New members are always welcome, as are partners – the only rule is they must join in, including helping to prepare the meals.

Regularly held at the Lake Charm Hall, Cooking Up a Storm encourages members to come and go, with the understanding that work, harvesting or travel can mean not everyone is able to attend on a monthly basis.

As well as community connectedness, the group encourages leadership abilities among its participants and has seen members grow in confidence in both their leadership and cooking skills.

From its very beginning, Cooking Up a Storm Lakes District has included rural men from the area, who have then continued to participate in the group – a significant achievement and an indication of the success the project has had in bringing the community together. The group offers these single rural men the chance to connect with their community, enjoy a home-cooked meal while also improving their own cooking skills.

Cooking Up a Storm developed from a partnership between the Gannawarra Shire Council, Northern District Community Health Service, Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership and the Lakes District community.

The project, which encourages everyone to participate in the sessions – no matter their level of cooking skills, has seen its members develop a strong camaraderie and connection.



## UNITE – together. build. harness. enhance.

Build and enhance collective action and cooperation for mutual benefit and increased social capital.

In most definitions of social exclusion, social relationships and networks are a central component, and a key requirement for a fully participative and inclusive life. It is through shared action that the community gains strength, it is a process that increases choices, and creating an environment where people can exercise their full potential to lead productive creative lives (Cavaye, 2004).

### EXAMPLES OF ACTION:

- Build, enhance, and sustain community networks/ groups with a diverse range of members e.g. Identify, value and work with existing networks / groups rather than creating a new group for every project. These groups can be supported to become more accepting of diversity if required;
- Identify the existing concerns of the people and support them to identify solutions and implement actions – this may mean leaving what professionals identify as issues until it is important to the community. May include supporting communities with advice in advocating for resources for community priorities;
- Support locally led activities that promote a sense of community spirit e.g. street parties/jumble sales, social media groups;
- Identify and develop community-based methods of support such as babysitting clubs, walking groups and food cooperatives;
- Support local efforts to engage more people in community volunteering and social activities, such as volunteer groups, churches, service clubs, community groups, sport clubs or arts groups;
- Encourage the community to come together and utilise their shared voice for collective action activities to address community concerns;



## CASE STUDY

# EPIC SAYS ENOUGH TO MORE POKIES

**A community group's strong stance against the proposed introduction of extra electronic gaming machines into its town has united and given a voice to a whole community.**

Founded in August 2010, the Enough Pokies in Castlemaine (EPIC) community group was formed to oppose the possibility of 65 more electronic gaming machines (pokies) being introduced to the town.

As well as providing information about pokies and their impact, EPIC gave community members the chance to voice their concerns about the proposal and to be heard. The group was supported by many Castlemaine community groups, local businesses and the Castlemaine Traders Association.

The proposal for the extra pokies was initially approved by the former Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (now the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation).

This decision was appealed by the Mount Alexander Shire Council at Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), with EPIC given the opportunity to participate in the appeal. This participation was a legal first – no other community organisation had provided evidence to VCAT in this way.

On February 14, 2013 VCGR's decision was overturned, with VCAT finding there was "strong anti-pokies sentiment" in sections of Castlemaine. The outcome highlighted the significant impact EPIC's campaign had on the final decision.

EPIC's success was largely due to its ability to make connections and learn from other communities, and to collaborate with the Mount Alexander Shire Council and the community they represented.

Not only did the process by EPIC members highlight the issue of bringing extra pokie machines into Castlemaine, but also helped build the group's capacity and of the wider community. Community members also came together to fight for what they believe in.

Maurice Blackburn Lawyers' (who worked pro bono for the community) head of Social Justice Practice Elizabeth O'Shea said the VCAT decision was a great result.

"We are really pleased that the tribunal recognised the range and intensity of the community opposition and this provides encouragement to other community groups who might wish to fight pokies developments in their town," she said.



## CASE STUDY

# STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY LEAD PARK TRANSFORMATION

**A parcel of land in Swan Hill that was formerly known as “prickle park” has undergone a complete transformation to become a much-used and loved community space.**

George Lay Park is now a community hub, with family gatherings and birthday parties a regular feature. Local preschools and primary schools are also using the park for sport and fun activities.

Supported by the City of Swan Hill Community Plan, Swan Hill College Year 11 and 12 VCAL students took a lead role in the George Lay Park project from its very beginning.

The students, in partnership with Swan Hill Rural City Council, carried out initial surveys with local residents, helped with concept designs for the park and provided major input into the George Lay Park Masterplan – the park’s blueprint for its redevelopment.

The VCAL students also helped raise funds for improvements to the park through barbecues, family fun days, garage sales and cake stalls. Students also invited and encouraged community members to be involved in the park’s transformation, such as the creation of a community garden and forest of fun play area.

George Lay Park’s construction was also made possible through funding from the State Government’s Putting Locals First program and Council, as well as in-kind support from Swan Hill College and community members.

Throughout the project, the students (and community members) worked with a number of experts, including engineers, a landscaper, Council’s Rural Access Officer for all abilities access, an artist, Parks and Gardens and more. This resulted in upskilling their knowledge, gaining more confidence and strengthening community resources.

“The Swan Hill College students have been involved first hand at working within the community to see the George Lay Park redevelopment come to fruition,” Swan Hill College Year 11 Manager and RTO Manager Kylie Gardner said.

“They now have ownership and pride in seeing community projects succeed and a playground that is utilised every day of the week. We are proud as teachers, students and an entire community.”

In early August 2013, a crowd of students, teachers and staff gathered for the official opening of George Lay Park by the Member for Swan Hill, the Honourable Peter Walsh MP and the Swan Hill College VCAL students.

The team effort behind the George Lay Park redevelopment was also recognised at the Local Government for Excellence awards, where it won the award for Community Assets and Infrastructure Initiative Category (\$1.5 million and under).

The Swan Hill College students have been involved first hand at working within the community to see the George Lay Park redevelopment come to fruition.





## CASE STUDY

# GIRGARRE LOOKS FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

**The willingness of a community to band together and try something new has led to a spectacular and sustainable future for Girgarre.**

Girgarre was once a thriving Victorian town with an expanding population and a prospering dairy industry. But drought and dairy industry rationalisation soon saw this once flourishing town begin to fade. Not only were businesses closing, the community itself became disconnected.

Realising their town was dying, a group of residents formed the Development Group (also known as the Girgarre Action Group).

A member of the group suggested they run a farmers' market the second Sunday of every month. The event would bring the community together to socialise, buy fresh local produce and talk to their neighbours over a free cup of coffee.

"During the running of the market 40 people aged from 10 to 70 volunteer to cook breakfast, squeeze juice, make tea and coffee, set up and pack up. People who had never volunteered before were driving over the district nailing market signs up in trees to advertise the day." Jane Smith, Development Group member.

To help make the market's atmosphere even more enjoyable, the group decided to bring music to the event. The first farmers' market saw three musicians entertain the crowd and soon after the market began to grow and prosper.

The popularity of the musicians at the market also sparked the idea of a local bluegrass and country music festival. This idea was the beginning of Girgarre's successful annual music festival, Moosic Muster.

With little money to run the event, the Development Group and some dedicated locals set out to find musicians.

That first event saw 60 musicians come to Girgarre for the weekend, where they played at night and taught local children how to play music during the day. A free concert held at the old Girgarre hall was packed out, where musicians and attendees also enjoyed a home-cooked supper.

Both the Moosic Muster and farmers' market are bringing financial benefits to the town, including funding a community car to address the issue of limited public transport in the area. The CFA facilities have also been upgraded, while the local school and recreation reserve receive vital income.

Development Group member Jan Smith said both events had brought about wonderful change for the Girgarre community, particularly during the drought.

"In a time when our whole lifestyle is under threat from drought, to have a group of city people join us in creating this amazing event is nothing short of spectacular. What an impact this has had on our town of 200 people," she said of the Moosic Muster.

"Thanks to an idea of one man and the willingness of our community to back it, Girgarre looks forward to the future."

"Thanks to an idea of one man and the willingness of our community to back it, Girgarre looks forward to the future."



## ACCEPT – understand. respect. adapt. celebrate.

Genuine relationships built with trust, acceptance and understanding of diversity, cultures, beliefs and history.

From the perspective of social justice ideologies, increasing social inclusion is about human rights, equality of opportunity, human dignity, and fairness for all. It may or may not be linked to economic interests, but its primary aim is to enable all human beings to participate fully in society with respect for their human dignity (Langworthy, 2008).

### EXAMPLES OF ACTION:

- Build understanding of diversity, cultures, beliefs and history e.g. Use stories and experiences to share Aboriginal values, responsibilities and spiritual beliefs with children from a range of cultural backgrounds;
- Encourage dialogue between different ethnic groups to promote understanding and empathy. Build and sustain networks and partnerships between different groups and support the development of cross-cultural leadership within the community.
- Support community-based activities that bring people together and promote harmony, such as community festivals that celebrate diversity;
- Communicate anti-discrimination and pro-diversity messages through media e.g. develop and disseminate materials that dispel cultural myths and stereotypes and raise awareness and empathy;
- Arts sector work that promotes awareness and challenges stereotypes;
- Using position and influence to condemn public displays of discrimination, e.g. Individuals or organisations publically supporting initiatives such as “Racism stops here”;
- Begin formal events with an acknowledgement of the area’s traditional custodians and Elders past and present;
- Review of policies, systems and organisational structures for openness, responsivity and capacity to provide culturally appropriate access and service delivery, e.g. Develop a policy on cultural diversity that embeds diversity into all organisational functions and activities;
- Organisational public spaces, waiting rooms and appointment processes can be alienating for some individuals or groups. Review and make changes towards a more welcoming environment;
- Undertake a staff language survey to identify those who speak languages other than English;
- Employ a diversity officer to oversee the implementation of an organisational diversity policy and maintain a focus on multicultural issues. Provide diversity training for all staff. Increase staff’s awareness of different groups’ needs and barriers to participation. Develop staff leadership skills to address discrimination and promote diversity;
- Encourage job applications from people who represent the diversity in the community;



## CASE STUDY

# CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ONE AND ALL IN CAMPASPE

**A revolutionary initiative has not only created opportunities for people of all abilities to participate together in recreational activities, but has shaped a collective community attitude.**

The One and All Inclusion Project sees people of all abilities participate in camps, cross country events, athletics carnivals, debutante balls, sporting games, dance and concert rehearsals, and community-based social projects.

Participants are buddied up with an able-bodied peer who mentors, trains and participates with them in a variety of sport, recreation, community or school-based activities.

The project, which began in 2009, was originally aimed at promoting inclusion in sport. Since then, this trailblazing initiative has been fully embraced by the community and is not only creating opportunities for people with a disability, but also for able-bodied participants. These individuals are emerging as richer, stronger, more confident and accepting.

The project, which began in 2009, was originally aimed at promoting inclusion in sport. Since then, this trailblazing initiative has been fully embraced by the community and is not only creating opportunities for people with a disability, but also for able-bodied participants.

"One and All has broken down barriers between people. There's going to be a generation with a better understanding of the challenges faced by people living with disabilities," Project Coordinator Jacqui Davies said.

"Since the beginning, the concept has become a bit of a movement across the region and has been overwhelmingly embraced by local schools, sporting clubs and the community".

"The project has increased awareness, acceptance and inclusion within the community – and it's changed lives, and not just if you have a disability, but everyone."





## CASE STUDY

# CELEBRATING SUNRAYSIA'S CULTURAL DIVERSITY

**More than 2000 community members came together to celebrate Sunraysia's cultural diversity when the inaugural Sunraysia Multicultural Festival was held in April 2014.**

Community members attending the festival enjoyed dance, music, food stalls, costume displays, art, craft, interactive activities, static displays, singing workshops and basket weaving.

The festival, which was organised by the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, Mildura Rural City Council and local community groups in partnership with the Victorian Government, created an opportunity for intercultural understanding and celebration.

Festival committee member Yesim Saritoprak, who is from Mildura's Turkish community said the committee included members from the Samoan, Turkish, Burundian, Italian, Tongan, Filipino and Afghani communities.

"Most of us have never worked on a committee before and this is the first time Mildura has held a multicultural festival. We had to learn about budgets, marketing, OH&S. Some of us got our Food Handlers Certificate as well. Everyone on the committee had an opinion. We learnt about each other's culture and how to work together.

"We were very nervous but the day turned out well. We are already talking about and planning for next year's festival."

Tommy Aupaau who is from the Samoan community also praised the event and the committee.

"I have never been on a committee before and at first I did not say much," he said.

"We had meetings for nearly five months and finally it was the day of the festival. I felt very proud to be part of the planning and also cooking food from our community for everyone to taste. It was very exciting, we sold out of food".

The festival, which was organised by the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, Mildura Rural City Council and local community groups in partnership with the Victorian Government, created an opportunity for intercultural understanding and celebration.





"Everyone was happy and it was a beautiful day with many people coming to see the festivities. I feel happy to be involved again next year."

In addition to raising the profile of Sunraysia's culturally vibrant community, the event established relationships and provided networking and community planning opportunities for committee members.

Feedback from those who attended the event has also been positive, with one community member stating "(the) weather was fantastic, performances were diverse and of great quality, we will definitely be back again next year!"

Multicultural Event Coordinator – Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council  
Michelle Kelly said one of the main aims of the festival was to create "an opportunity for cultural understanding".

"This festival has brought together a diverse group of people working together as a committee who wanted to share their culture with the Sunraysia community," she said.

"Along the way they learnt skills in many aspects of event management as well as working with community, local businesses and other stakeholders.

"It was hectic and fun at the same time. We have learnt a great deal from this experience and feel confident the success of the event will continue to grow in the future."

Planning is already underway for the 2015 Sunraysia Multicultural Festival.



In addition to raising the profile of Sunraysia's culturally vibrant community, the event established relationships and provided networking and community planning opportunities for committee members.



## CHANGE – collaborate. integrate. systemic. include.

“Joined-up” approaches that link and change systems, sectors and structures that promote the inclusion of individuals and communities in genuine participation.

For organisations to have an impact in communities they must have a clear understanding that social problems are inter-related and therefore the solutions to these problems must also be inter-related. Responses that cut across organisations to form partnerships with other organisations, communities and business, are instrumental to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged. Joined-up responses recognize the multi-dimensional nature of exclusion whilst affording a significant focus on prevention and early intervention strategies (South Australia Government, 2009).

### EXAMPLES OF ACTION:

- Development of partnerships between community, organisations and government;
- Collaboration and partnership skill development activities for community members and organisations;
- Review organisational policies, program development guidelines and professional development competencies to ensure they promote collaboration rather than continue ‘old patterns of service delivery’ that can reflect or further promote exclusion;
- Examine inclusion at a “systems” level and identify levers for change. E.g. A cross-sectoral working group to address the health and economic impacts of climate change on a rural community;
- Participation of organisational and government partners and communities in the development of Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plans and the linking of that work with organisational plans;
- Undertaking joint professional development activities that model the collaborative process and strengthen partnerships through the development of shared understandings, stronger communication and trust building;
- Joint advocacy by organisations and communities to bring local issues to the attention of local politicians and policy makers;
- Organisational policies that enable and encourage diversity in leadership positions;
- Collaboration between planners and residents on neighbourhood infrastructure – for walking, cycling and playing e.g. Housing developments that address security of tenure, space, place, affordability and quality of housing;
- Work in partnership with communities and businesses to identify and provide training and employment opportunities for people from disadvantaged groups.
- Conduct an analysis of locations where people may not be socially connected (e.g. identify areas where many people live alone or do not speak English).





## CASE STUDY

# ABORIGINAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP GROUP – CLOSING THE GAP

**A partnership approach is acting to “close the gap” and bring about health and wellbeing changes for Aboriginal community members in the Campaspe and Murray Shires.**

The Campaspe Aboriginal Health Partnership Group includes members from a range of health, community services and government sectors, who are working together to achieve positive outcomes. This includes mental health promotion, quit smoking programs, maternal health and cultural recognition.

Chaired by Njernda Aboriginal Corporation with a convenor role by Campaspe Primary Care Partnership, the group’s first task was to develop a local Aboriginal wellbeing profile. From here it set priorities, developed work plans and established working groups to address issues.

“We all work together to focus on the same needs and have built our relationships with mainstream who are working with us rather than against us; it’s been wonderful” said Njernda’s Kelli Bartlett.

A number of successful programs and activities have since contributed to, and are continuing to improve, the health and wellbeing of local Aboriginal communities.

“We openly discuss issues and there’s actions; it’s not like there’s meeting after meeting and nothing happens, there’s always strategies put in place to address our community’s needs”.

This includes smoking cessation activities such as QUIT training, a focus on smoking among young people, establishing a smokefree workplace at Njernda and maternity programs.

A number of successful programs and activities have since contributed to, and are continuing to improve, the health and wellbeing of local Aboriginal communities.



Project activities have also focused on mental health promotion, including the delivery of Aboriginal mental health first aid program, developing a crisis response pathway (including after-hours solutions) and promoting recognition of culture.

A chronic illness initiative also saw Njernda Aboriginal Corporation strengthen its partnership with Echuca Regional Health and other local health organisations. This resulted in collaborative discharge planning, Home and Community Care planning and Aboriginal Medical Service care plans.

The Partnership group has also improved collaboration with the hospital’s Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers, acute and primary care communication and access to Njernda services and Hospital Admission Risk Program referrals.

“The community feels more comfortable to use mainstream services”.

The Murray Campaspe Aboriginal Health Partnership Group continues to be an example of how partnerships can achieve positive changes within local communities and help close the gap.

## CASE STUDY

# FAMILY FRIENDLY SCHOOL SPACE BRINGING POSITIVE CHANGE

**The creation of family friendly rooms and play areas at Swan Hill Primary School has seen the idea of a “school” transform into a community hub, where everyone belongs.**

The Family Friendly School Space is seeing positive results around early promotion of play, healthy eating and exercise, while benefiting the wellbeing of children, parents and carers.

“The family friendly rooms have enabled the school and Swan Hill Rural City Council to partner and create a versatile and unique space. Staff, parents, children and the wider community can gather to care for, educate and collaborate in a home-like environment, but with all the assets and guidelines that define “school”,” Swan Hill Rural City Council Children’s Advocate Leah Farrow said.

“The smells, furniture and relaxed program reflect the warmth of home, while the diverse social groupings and activity are reflective of our local community.

“The resources available are as educational as an early year’s service. The opportunity to offer experiences and activities that would otherwise have no place at school is invaluable.”

Ms Farrow said the rooms were open at a recent school disco, which enabled the Children’s Advocate and School Council representatives to greet and chat with families while they waited for their children.

“Most of the families who waited, had cuppas and sat comfortably, were connected to the space by their participation in playgroup, parenting programs or children attending Breakfast Club. It was obvious to me on this night the strong sense of belonging that many families have developed to the rooms/school via their children over the past few years.”

Eloquent Speech Pathology’s Rebecca Kreuger, who is a playgroup facilitator/partner, said the rooms also provided an informal setting where families could access speech pathology services.

“It connects myself and them to schools and the school community. The space allows for children and families who may otherwise not be included in the mainstream school community, to connect and develop a sense of belonging which can then become the vehicle to wider community connection,” she said.

EAL Coordinator at Swan Hill Primary School Anne Pryor said it was valuable to have a space that “is welcoming for both parents and children”.

“When families come to enquire about school matters, I always take them to the Family Friendly Rooms where we can all relax together while information is shared”.

“Children see me going towards the space and say ‘are you going to the Family Friendly Rooms? Can we come too? We want to play’. Breakfast Club regulars approach me and ask ‘Can I get an apple from the fruit bowl? I’m hungry’. They know the fresh food is for everyone.”

The space allows for children and families who may otherwise not be included in the mainstream school community, to connect and develop a sense of belonging which can then become the vehicle to wider community connection.

As well as providing opportunities to work with external organisations, the space is also connecting community members from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

A parent of four said as bus travellers, the Breakfast Club had been very beneficial.

"We are up at 6am and breakfast is very rushed, and they may not have enough to start their school day.... my kids love going there and always feel welcome and relaxed."

As well as providing opportunities to work with external organisations, the space is also connecting community members from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

A mother with a Nepali background said the space had helped her "a lot".

"I was all alone in this place. I knew no one but here I feel welcome I am meeting people. They greet me, I feel very, very happy because of this place," she said.

The Family Friendly Space is a partnership between Swan Hill Rural City Council, Swan Hill Primary School, Eloquent Speech Pathology and Mallee Family Care.





## CASE STUDY

# GO GOLDFIELDS ALLIANCE BRINGING POSITIVE CHANGE

**A series of shire-wide, community-driven approaches to improve social, education and health outcomes for children, youth and families is having an impact in one of Victoria's most disadvantaged communities.**

An innovative alliance of organisations, Go Goldfields was created to deliver local responses to complex and long-term issues within the Central Goldfields Shire.

One of Victoria's most disadvantaged communities, Central Goldfields Shire has traditionally been ranked last out of 79 shires on many health and social indicators. This was seen as a sign of the scale of health and social issues facing the community.

But results from the alliance's mid-term report released in March 2014, indicates that Go Goldfields is overcoming these issues, where previous approaches did not work.

Supported by the Victorian Government to the amount of \$2.5 million over three years, the Go Goldfields Alliance developed "place-based" approaches targeting the whole community. This also gave the community ownership of the plan, ensuring its sustainability.

Working with children, youth and families, Go Goldfields focused on achieving a range of outcomes including improved communication and literacy skills, and opportunities and positive life experiences for children and their families.

Working with children, youth and families, Go Goldfields focused on achieving a range of outcomes including improved communication and literacy skills, and opportunities and positive life experiences for children and their families.

It also set out to improve community connectedness for children, youth and families and help young people gain employment through improving their connection with training and education.

The mid-term report outlines a number of key successes as a result of the Go Goldfields Alliance including around communication, literacy and numeracy for children and families. It is also seeing increased parental confidence and skills, improved communication between Child Protection Services and





An early years' service provider worker said Go Goldfields had resulted in "people...feeling listened to and supported, which has led to increased confidence."

early years' services, and strong community engagement in the prevention of family violence.

There are also successes around improved community connectedness for children, youth and families as well as a decrease in unexplained school absences for Grade 5 and 6 children. The alliance is also seeing increased parental engagement with schools and more positive connections between schools and vulnerable families.

An early years' service provider worker said Go Goldfields had resulted in "people...feeling listened to and supported, which has led to increased confidence."

A community leader also spoke of the unity the initiative had created.

"There are lots of people lined up walking in the same direction – everyone talking the same language, same messages."

Go Goldfields includes representatives from Central Goldfields Shire Council, Maryborough Education Centre, Goldfields Employment and Learning Centre, Neighbourhood Renewal and Central Victorian Health Alliance Primary Care Partnership. There are also representatives from Maryborough District Health Service, Victoria Police, St Lukes, Community Arts, Asteria Disability Services and Centrelink.

Additional stakeholders include kindergartens, childcare centres, library, schools, community groups and local businesses.



# Tools

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# Tools

## INTRODUCTION

This section provides some practical tools to aid the consideration of rural social inclusion in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes of organisations, projects, programs and partnerships.

The **Audit Tool** is a checklist of questions that can be applied retrospectively or prospectively to initiatives to determine whether rural social inclusion was, is or will be adequately addressed. Ideally the audit is used during the planning and development phase to ensure inclusive processes are prioritised. It can be used in preparation for using the Framework to identify potential areas of focus for any initiatives that will impact on social exclusion. The audit can also be used as an evaluation tool to assist in discussing the strengths and weaknesses of any activity with regard to rural social inclusion.

The **Planning Prompts** are designed to be a short sharp tool to encourage a social inclusion lens in general planning. The prompts can be printed and distributed in planning workshops or displayed in common areas to stimulate thinking regarding rural social inclusion.

# Tools: Audit Tool

## RURAL SOCIAL INCLUSION RESOURCE – AUDIT TOOL

When planning social inclusion interventions asking these and other questions will identify and challenge assumption. It will assist users to identify areas requiring further thought and investigation and, when used in conjunction with the Framework, will help to focus efforts by providing starting points for action on rural social inclusion.

	✓	Comments/ Thoughts/ Future Follow up
<b>Key Determinants and Contributing Factors</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have we considered the social determinants of health?</li> <li>• Are there any significant life changes or stages impacting on the community of interest?</li> </ul>		
<b>Vulnerable Populations</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have we identified individuals, groups and communities as vulnerable? Do they consider themselves as vulnerable?</li> <li>• In what ways will the focus population be involved in planning, delivery, participation and evaluation of the work?</li> <li>• Are we doing with or to?</li> <li>• How well do we understand the local issues and barriers to social inclusion for these individuals and communities?</li> <li>• On what basis are we prioritising working with these individuals, groups and communities?</li> </ul>		
<b>Partners for Action</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who else should we be speaking to? Could a partnership approach strengthen the project?</li> <li>• Do we have capacity for genuine community engagement and empowerment?</li> <li>• Do we have the capacity within our organisation to commit the time and resources and have flexibility needed for this initiative?</li> <li>• Is an advocacy strategy required? What are we advocating for? Who to?</li> <li>• Where is the community in our partnerships?</li> <li>• What are the levers for change?</li> </ul>		

# Tools: Audit Tool

	✓	Comments/ Thoughts/ Future Follow up
<b>Principles of Action (Engage, Empower, Unite, Accept, Change)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have read and understood the “Principles into Practice” component of the resource.</li> <li>• What more do I need to know for this project?</li> <li>• What is our community engagement plan? How will we engage ‘hard to reach’ individuals and communities?</li> <li>• Have we identified whose voices are not being heard and trialled different ways of communicating and engaging with them.</li> <li>• Have we included multiple methods of communication.</li> <li>• How well do we understand the individual and collective cultures, values, beliefs, attitudes and history of these individuals, groups and communities? What more do we need to know?</li> <li>• How well do we understand the relationships of these individuals, groups and communities – their strengths, issues, local leadership and power relationships?</li> <li>• Do we have an appropriate understanding of diversity and cultural competence?</li> <li>• What relevant evidence based practice is available for us to draw on?</li> <li>• Have we looked at this from a systems perspective? What other sectors are involved?</li> </ul>		
<b>Long Term Benefits and Outcomes</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will this look like in 1 year from now? 10 years?</li> <li>• Does the aim reflect the concepts outlined in the Foundations of Rural Social Inclusion?</li> <li>• Is our evaluation meaningful to the community?</li> <li>• How do we plan to disseminate the results of our work?</li> <li>• How will our work show ongoing benefits for participants/ community?</li> <li>• Can the principles of Rural Social Inclusion be incorporated into our organisation’s mission statement, vision, job descriptions, goals, diversity plan, strategic plans?</li> <li>• What’s the likelihood of success?</li> </ul>		



# Tools: Planning Prompt

## HAVE YOU CONSIDERED RURAL SOCIAL INCLUSION?

Rural communities disproportionately experience barriers to social inclusion including poorer access to housing, transport and support services. This results in greater inequities within rural communities, giving more power to those already privileged. A review of the most up-to-date evidence suggests that building the following actions into our plans, policies and everyday work will act to increase rural social inclusion.

### **ENGAGE** – invite. listen. involve. facilitate.

Community engagement to involve everyone in the decisions that affect them and facilitate finding their own solutions.

- How are you involving the target population? At all stages?
- What do you need to do to facilitate participation?

### **EMPOWER** – learn. strengthen. encourage. participate.

Embrace knowledge, skills and confidence of individuals and communities, strengthen resources and influence towards empowerment and self-determination.

- Do you need to build capacity?
- Who can be encouraged to step up?

### **UNITE** – together. build. harness. enhance.

Build and enhance collective action and cooperation for mutual benefit and increased social capital.

- Is everyone working together? Can we pool resources?
- What strengths are already there and how can we build on them?

### **ACCEPT** – understand. respect. adapt. celebrate.

Genuine relationships built with trust, acceptance and understanding of diversity, cultures, beliefs and history.

- Is everyone included? What can you do differently?
- How are you celebrating diversity?

### **CHANGE** – collaborate. integrate. systemic. include.

“Joined-up” approaches that link and change systems, sectors and structures that promotes the inclusion of individuals and communities in genuine participation.

- What are levers and who are the players?
- Who’s not here that should be?





# Evaluating Social Inclusion

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# Evaluating Social Inclusion

Building socially inclusive rural communities requires us to act to reduce social exclusion. This resource provides guidance on how to tackle social exclusion by introducing a rural social inclusion lens to planning, implementation and evaluation processes across a diverse audience and within a rural context.

## **How will we know we are making a difference, or at least on the right track?**

The range of actions that could result from the use of this resource are so broad that this information should be used only as a guide to evaluating rural social inclusion. In particular, this resource can guide evaluation in relation to the five principles, engage, empower, unite, accept and change.

In addition to best-practice evaluation of any strategies implemented, the following are some potential methods of evaluation in relation to rural social inclusion:

## **BSIRC AUDIT TOOL**

The Audit Tool (see pages 43-44) is a checklist of questions that can be applied retrospectively or prospectively to initiatives to determine whether rural social inclusion was, is or will be adequately addressed. The audit can be used as an evaluation tool to assist with discussing the strengths and weaknesses of any activity with regard to rural social inclusion, and could be applied pre/post any activity.

## POTENTIAL SHORT-MEDIUM TERM INDICATORS

The initial stakeholder consultations for this resource and the framework itself documented some of the potential short to medium term outcomes of working to increase rural social inclusion. The questions posed in the audit tool (above) also identify certain outcomes and process changes that can lead to greater rural social inclusion. Based on this information, the following short to medium term indicators have been compiled and can give an indication that organisations, projects, programs and partnerships are addressing the five principles of rural social inclusion and are on the path to becoming socially inclusive rural communities.

- Organisations, projects, programs and partnerships have identified vulnerable populations in planning processes.
- Vulnerable populations provide information about local issues and barriers to rural social inclusion.
- Individuals experience and data is used in planning and decision making.
- Decisions are made based on both local and global evidence.
- Number of media releases, public statements, images, brochures, events that celebrate diversity.
- Acknowledgement or welcome to country performed at all events.
- Consumer satisfaction surveys indicate the consumers feel heard and have a say in decision making.
- Multiple methods of communication are utilised.
- Organisations, projects, programs and partnerships communicate appropriately with the community/vulnerable population including feeding back of results/outcomes.
- All projects/programs consider building the capacity of consumers/community.
- The focus population is involved in planning, delivery, participation and evaluation of work (co-design).
- Community engagement plans include methods for engaging with 'harder to reach' individuals and communities.
- Number of plans, policies, practises, procedures and programs that are updated/changed to reflect rural social inclusion principles.
- All levels including board, management and operational have training to increase capacity for genuine community engagement and empowerment.
- The principles of rural social inclusion are incorporated into organisations, projects, programs and partnerships mission statement, vision, job description, goals, diversity plans, and strategic plans.
- File audit indicates that all levels within organisations (boards, management and operational) utilise the framework's principles to apply a rural social inclusion lens to all/new work.
- Number of active partnerships engaged in by communities/organisations.
- Number of projects, programs co-designed with target populations.

# Evaluating Social Inclusion

## POTENTIAL LONG-TERM INDICATORS

The following list is of indicators at a population level. These indicators can provide an indication over a longer term on factors directly impacting on rural social inclusion. The framework in which these are presented is based on the Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Faring report (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2012) released by the Australian government, however draws on indicators from various sources (see source list attached).

Resources	Indicator	Source
<b>Material/ Economic Resources</b>	• Index of Relative Socio-economic disadvantage.	1
	• Individuals with income less than \$400/week.	2
	• Low income/welfare dependent families with children.	3
	• Ran out of food in the previous 12 months and couldn't afford to buy anymore (yes).	4
<b>Health &amp; Disability</b>	• Age at death males.	3
	• Age at death females.	3
	• Persons reporting fair or poor health.	4
	• Disability support pension recipients.	5
<b>Education &amp; Skills</b>	• No of overseas born residents who don't speak english well or at all.	2
	• Proportion of children vulnerable on 2 or more domains (AEDC: school entry).	6
	• Proportion of children vulnerable on 1 or more domains (AEDC: School entry).	6
	• Yr 9 students achieving minimum standards in numeracy.	7
	• Yr 9 students achieving minimum national standards in literacy.	7
	• 19 year olds who have attained year 12 or equivalent.	7
	• Persons who completed a higher education qualification.	2
<b>Social Resources</b>	• Feels part of the community.	8
	• Social support - get help from social sources.	8
	• Able to get help from neighbours (yes, definitely).	4
	• Households with broadband internet.	2
	• Household internet access.	4
	• Social networking used to organise time with family/friends.	8
	• Students who feel socially connected & get along with their peers (yr 5&6).	7
	• Students who feel socially connected & get along with their peers (Yr 7-9).	7
	• Adolescents who report being bullied recently.	9



Resources	Indicator	Source
<b>Community and Institutional resources</b>	• Community acceptance of diverse cultures.	8
	• Tolerance of diversity (yes, definitely).	4
	• Received help from volunteer-based organisation.	4
	• Attended a support group meeting in the previous 2 years.	4
	• People who agreed that most people could be trusted.	4
	• Satisfaction with appearance of public spaces.	10
	• Satisfaction with community and cultural activities.	10
	• Transport limitations.	8
	• Inadequate and unreliable public transport.	4
	• People believe there are good facilities and services.	11
<b>Housing</b>	• Mortgage stress.	3
	• Rental stress.	3
	• Affordable rental housing.	12
	• Number of social housing.	13
<b>Personal Safety</b>	• People who feel safe walking alone after dark.	8
	• Police attend family violence incidents.	14
	• Child protection Orders (0-17yrs).	7

# Evaluating Social Inclusion

Participation	Indicator	Source
<b>Work</b>	Unemployment.	15
	Labour force participation (15-64yrs).	2
<b>Learn</b>	15-19 yr old school leavers engaged full time (study/training/work).	2
	15-19 yr old school leavers disengaged.	2
	19 year olds who have attained year 12 or equivalent.	7
<b>Engage (Social Participation)</b>	People who help out as volunteers.	2
	Participation in art and cultural activities.	8
	Membership of a sports group.	4
	Membership of a school group.	4
	Membership of a other community/action group.	4
	Attendance at a local community event within the past six months.	4
	Persons who share a meal with family at least 5 days per week .	4
<b>Have a Voice (Political, Civic, Community)</b>	Participation in citizen engagement in last year.	4
	People who feel they have a say on important issues.	4
	Feeling valued by society (yes definitely).	4
	Perception of community involvement.	4
	Importance rating of local government community consultation and engagement.	4
	Satisfaction with local government community consultation and engagement.	4
	Importance rating of local government informing the community.	4
	Satisfaction with local government informing the community.	4

## Source list

- 1** ABS, Socio-Economic Indices For Areas (SEIFA)
- 2** Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) , 2011 Census of Population and Housing
- 3** Social Health Atlas of Victorian Local Government Areas 2012, PHIDU
- 4** Victorian Population Health Survey 2011, Prevention and Population Health Branch, Wellbeing, Integrated Care and Ageing Division, DH
- 5** Centrelink; 2012 Estimated Resident Population, ABS
- 6** Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)\_ <https://www.aedc.gov.au/>
- 7** Victorian Child & Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS) Portal
- 8** VicHealth Indicators Survey 2011
- 9** DEECD, extracted from the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS) portal.
- 10** Local Government Customer Satisfaction Survey 2015, Department of Community Planning and Development
- 11** Indicators of Community Strength at the Local Government Area level in Victoria 2008 (released Jan 2010), DPCD (now DTPLI)
- 12** Affordable lettings by LGA, Housing and Community Building, DHS
- 13** Housing and Community Building, DHS; 2011 Census of Population and Housing, Basic Community Profile, Census Table: B31 - occupied and unoccupied private dwellings, ABS
- 14** Family Incidents: Victorian Crime Statistics Agency
- 15** Small area labour markets, Commonwealth Department of Employment



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