

SOCIAL INCLUSION MINISTERS MEETING

ADELAIDE

18 SEPTEMBER 2009

COMMUNIQUÉ

At their first meeting in Adelaide today, Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers affirmed their commitment to find new ways to work together to improve opportunities for social inclusion for the most disadvantaged Australians. Ministers agreed that social inclusion is a priority for all jurisdictions, especially as Australia recovers from the global financial crisis.

A socially inclusive society is one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in social and economic life.

Social exclusion has had a deep impact on individuals, families and communities around Australia, resulting in too many Australians being left behind.

All Australian Governments are committed to building social inclusion across their responsibilities and are undertaking a wide range of investment and reform.

These commitments range from early years, education and employment to local community renewal, mental health and disability reform and measures to increase social housing and reduce homelessness.

Social inclusion is a more pressing challenge as Australia recovers from the global financial crisis. Social inclusion in the recovery will focus on reducing the long term impact of the crisis by creating new opportunities for all Australians and ensuring that those vulnerable to the effects of social and economic change are not left behind.

Ministers noted the existing commitment to social inclusion in all jurisdictions. They also agreed there is further scope to assist those Australians at most risk of long-term disadvantage and promote active participation in society

To that end, all Governments agree to work collaboratively and use common principles to improve social inclusion outcomes, prioritising:

- children at risk of disadvantage;
- disengaged young people;
- jobless families; and
- locational disadvantage.

All Governments also agreed a joint program of work to drive further reform and better service provision through collaboration. Governments will:

- Prioritise early collaborative action in those locations identified as the most disadvantaged areas within the Commonwealth's 20 employment priority locations and 29 remote priority areas identified through COAG.
- Work collaboratively on social inclusion interventions in these locations and other areas, around four priority issues – children at risk of disadvantage, jobless families, locational disadvantage and disadvantaged youth.
- Complement multilateral work, by exploring opportunities to work bilaterally on specific social inclusion initiatives and locations over the next 12 months.
- Communicate to the Coordinators General the importance of focussing on social inclusion principles, especially as they relate to strengthening communities and employment opportunities for disadvantaged job seekers during the rollout of economic stimulus initiatives.
- Use existing governance mechanisms (where these exist) to ensure local involvement in the design and delivery of social inclusion measures.

Further the Commonwealth and States and Territories agree to work together to develop a draft action plan on social inclusion by early 2010 reflecting the decisions taken at this meeting. This plan will include:

- sharing administrative data where appropriate;
- immediate actions including assessment of governance models to drive collaboration and identification of existing opportunities that can be leveraged such as Communities for Children plus sites;
- a public forum to examine risks and strategies for reducing disadvantage in early childhood, to coincide with the publication of the Australian Early Development Index;
- an agreed plan for future work; and
- working with other Ministerial Councils to promote a whole-of-governments approach.

Ministers agreed to meet again in the first half of 2010.