



# The Salvation Army

## Australia

The Salvation Army

*Submission made on behalf of The Salvation Army Australia*

*Response to the*

**Select Committee for Inquiry into Intergenerational Welfare Dependence**

September 2018

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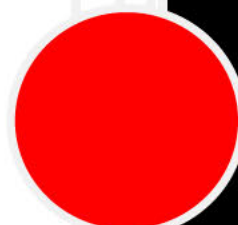
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### About The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is an international Christian movement with a presence in 128 countries. Operating in Australia since 1880, The Salvation Army is one of the largest providers of social services and programs for the most marginalised and socially excluded individuals in the community.

The Salvation Army Australia has a national annual operating budget of more than \$700 million and provides more than 1,000 social programs and activities through networks of social support services, community centres and churches across the country. Programs include:

- Emergency relief, material aid and case work
- Financial counselling and assistance
- Youth, adult and aged homelessness and housing services
- Family and domestic violence support and accommodation services
- Drug and alcohol support and treatment services
- Child, youth and family services
- Education, training and employment support services
- Personal counselling and support
- Emergency and disaster response and recovery services
- Chaplaincy
- Migrant and refugee services
- Aged care services.

### Mission oriented organisation

As a mission driven organisation, The Salvation Army seeks to reduce social disadvantage and create a fair and harmonious society through holistic and people centred approaches that reflect our commitment to and primacy of:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice.

We commit ourselves in prayer and practice to this land of Australia and its people, seeking reconciliation, unity and equity.

## Introduction

The Salvation Army welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Inquiry and offer its perspectives and recommendations. This submission is informed by The Salvation Army's collective experience, knowledge and expertise.

Throughout much of this submission, The Salvation Army draws attention to the programs and interventions that seek to make positive changes in the lives of people who are struggling and which have proven to release many disadvantaged Australians from welfare dependence. While The Salvation Army continues to support these tailored interventions and the hope that such programs bring to the lives of many, it is also important to acknowledge some of the other contextual factors surrounding job seeking and welfare that need to be remembered when considering the plight of the unemployed.

In their timely report on long-term unemployment, *Faces of Unemployment*, The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) and Jobs Australia<sup>1</sup> present a range of data that directly challenge many of the common assumptions and stereotypes held around job seekers and highlight some of the structural barriers that fuels exclusion from jobs for these groups. In finding that the cohort of long-term unemployed has surged since the 1990s (e.g. 15% of Newstart recipients have been on the payment for more than five years), the report also highlights various other cohorts experiencing exclusion from jobs and the policy failures that have fuelled these. For example, the report highlights the diminishing employment outcomes experienced by people the longer that they are unemployed (50% probability of employment for people 12 months later who are unemployed for less than three months, decreasing to 10% for those unemployed for more than five years). Indeed, the authors of the report essentially present a residualised welfare system, where the less disadvantaged in the labour market find jobs more quickly, leaving behind the more disadvantaged groups. This means that people with disability, older people, Indigenous, single parents and young people may face exclusion from jobs due to their age or situation. This comes alongside increased casualization and the reduction in entry-level or low-skilled jobs.

In light of the important findings of *Faces of Unemployment* and our own extensive experience in working with highly disadvantaged individuals and communities, The Salvation Army remains committed to working alongside governments in enhancing opportunities and outcomes for people who are unemployed, but also in our compassion and support for those who may remain excluded from mainstream opportunities.

### i. The factors preventing parents from gaining employment;

There are numerous barriers preventing people from seeking and securing employment, whether from a structural, social or personal perspective. Many people who access services at The Salvation Army present with multiple and complex needs, such as physical ailments, mental health issues, family violence, homelessness, addictions, trauma, isolation, low levels of educational attainment and training, and a lack of vocational skills and experience. These barriers often prevent and preclude many Australians from entering the workforce or being able to sustain employment.

Structural barriers such as intergenerational and regional socio-economic disadvantage, housing affordability, labour market changes (specifically casualisation of employment resulting, in increasing numbers of the underemployed), and an income support system that fails to protect people from poverty and impede people from gaining employment.

Each year, The Salvation Army conducts the Economic and Social Impact Survey (ESIS). This national research project examines the challenges, obstacles and experiences of disadvantage for people who access our Emergency Relief (ER) services. Our data demonstrates that the majority of respondents continue to experience extreme housing stress, face multiple barriers finding work and are forced to manage on very little income each week. This means that many people struggle to maintain a basic

standard of living, often go without essential items, and at times, are unable to feed themselves or their families.

Regarding employment, our findings highlighted:

- Nearly **one third** of respondents were actively **looking for a job**
- Jobseekers found prolonged unemployment, parenting responsibilities, and transport costs were their **main barriers** to find work
- Young people seeking employment found it hard to find work due to their lack of experience, education and skills
- **Half** of respondents reported that finding a job was the greatest challenge they faced each day
- **Mental health** was the main reason that precluded nearly **two in five** respondents from the labour force.

*“The hardest points in my life [have been] homelessness and unemployment. I’m looking for employment...rejection often occurs due to my age and lack of skills.” – TSA ESIS Respondent*

*“I’m single. I live alone. There’s no help, there’s just you. If you can’t work you’re really stuffed.” – TSA ESIS Respondent*

More practical measures are required to assist people on income support to find and sustain suitable employment, including:

- Flexible work options, including part-time and during school hours
- Nature of employment to include phased/transitional work options
- More affordable, accessible and quality childcare options
- Subsidised travel costs
- Subsidised training, skill development, capacity building opportunities
- Subsidised internet for job searchers
- Local job and economic development
- Additional incentives for employers to support more flexible work models and provide programs to support people sustain employment.

## ii. The impact of intergenerational unemployment on children;

All children have the right to live happy, safe and prosperous lives. They have the right to education, health, shelter, food and clothing. However, this may not always be the reality for children who are growing up in families where there has been long term unemployment and a lack of economic resources. Children raised in welfare-dependent families face challenges that restrict their abilities and capabilities, preventing them from moving out of a state of disadvantage.<sup>2</sup> They often lack positive role models, experience low educational attainment, self-sabotage or are simply discouraged from aspiring to live more fulfilling lives than those around them.

More commonly, children are taking on roles as parental carers, due to parental mental health, disabilities or AOD issues. These additional responsibilities can cause isolation and stress, and impact on children’s abilities to go to school, do their homework, spend time with friends or get a job.<sup>3</sup> Children may experience a loss of hope to be able to fully participate in education, impacting on entering the workforce in the future.

Investment in early childhood education and programs, particularly for disadvantaged children and their families, is the most effective way to encourage equal access to learning, development and promote quality outcomes for children. Furthermore, it alters the life trajectory for children, especially those from disadvantaged families, and reduces the negative consequences on child development and the future impact on reduced adult opportunity.<sup>4</sup>

Working with parents and the local community in Logan has been an effective way to engage families. For example, Communities for Children (CfC) Facilitating Partners Logan operate on a family and community engagement model. By consulting with parents, carers, children and a broad group of local community representatives and stakeholders who care about the wellbeing of the children, has been an effective way to close the gap, so that, by the age of twelve, the children of Logan will be just as healthy and happy as any other group of Australian children reaching agreed health, education and social milestones.

**See appendix 1 – Example: Communities for Children (CfC) Facilitating Partners Logan**

**See appendix 2 – Growing our mob strong overview**

iii. The important role of parents as ‘first teachers’;

Children living in intergenerational poverty typically lack the building blocks and financial literacy necessary to economic independence. Strengthening family relationships recognises the factors impacting on a family’s ability to support early child development, and seeks to build the family’s ability to respond and manage key impacts. It endeavours to build the capacity of adults to understand and manage cognitive, emotional, and behavioural processes, and their relationships. This makes way for the development of dedicated resources to support and strengthen families through collaborative services within the community.

Communities for Children (CfC) Facilitating Partners Logan, deliver *Learning For All* workshops which promote a culture in which children and families participate in and belong to a learning community, which includes early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services and Primary Schools, and community learning spaces. Schools teams are more aware and better resourced to support children and families; and families are adequately resourced and prepared for learning spaces.

Collaborative Family Centred Practice provides safe spaces for families and children to foster trusting relationships that are easily accessible, non-stigmatising and culturally competent. It incorporates a Family Partnership model of care with soft entry activities to achieve early intervention and promote early parental education. This may include play-based activities in which parents and children to participate in evidence-based program(s) providing co-construction experiences and intentional play. This practice is underpinned by collaborative service delivery that is cohesive and seamless, and encourages modelling and mentoring as a basis for delivery of services.

iv. A multi-generational approach which assists parents and their children together;

Long term welfare dependence and entrenched poverty are complex social issues impacting many disadvantaged Australians. Creative and targeted responses are required to target at risk and vulnerable families, starting with supporting children. The investment in early years education and resources directed at upper primary school years (grades 5, 6) and early high school years (7, 8) are crucial in order to engage children in learning and education, raise aspirations, provide choices, and in turn, foster pathways to future education and employment opportunities.

In Tasmania, The Salvation Army’s Communities for Children (CfC), in collaboration with local primary schools, deliver the *Children’s University* program. This is an international initiative that aims to raise aspirations and self-belief, foster curiosity and a love of learning, boost achievement, broaden horizons, and improve life chances. This program engages children and their parents in learning “destinations” and embraces education as a positive opportunity and journey investing in their futures.

**See appendix 3 – Children’s University program overview**

The *My Start* program is another example of a program engaging parents in educational opportunities, developing skills and a pathway to future training and employment. The *My Start* program is a 10 week program delivered at the local primary school, where the parent's child is attending. The program consists of three specifically chosen units from a nationally accredited qualification. It is designed to support parents to develop basic employability skills, gain practical work experience, and develop a Career and Learning Action Plan with SMART goals. Parents are supported to undertake 20 hours of volunteering during the program. This provides real work experience and the opportunity for the application of their skills and knowledge, increasing confidence and social connectivity. The Salvation Army has had great demonstrable success with parents engaged in this program.

**See appendix 4 – *My Start* program overview**

**v. The impact, if any, of welfare in creating disadvantage; and**

Income support is intended as a safety net and an entitlement for those who need it. However, for people receiving government benefits, maintaining an adequate standard of living is proving to be impossible. The cost of living continues to increase and housing/rental affordability is at crisis point. Reducing income support rates from Parenting Payments to Newstart Allowance for parents when their children turn eight, increases the risk of financial hardship and disadvantage for families and their children. The cost of raising children increases as they grow up. Reducing income support payments is a punitive response and further impoverishes families.

The rates and allowances of income supports, such as Newstart and Youth Allowance, have only increased marginally over the past two decades and have not matched rising living costs, utility bills, education, child care fees and housing costs. The Salvation Army's Economic and Social Impact Survey (ESIS) report demonstrates that this has left many people struggling to manage on limited income and unable to afford basic essentials for themselves and their families. Overall, ESIS respondents had a median disposable household income of **\$435 per week**. After paying housing costs, this is reduced to **\$147 per week**, or less than **\$21 per day**<sup>5</sup> to purchase all other essentials for the whole family. Newstart Allowance recipients were worst affected, being left with less than **\$17 per day**<sup>6</sup> to live on. This equates to an annual income of less than \$23,000 per year, **less than one third** of the average Australian median income and well below the poverty line. In fact, our research showed **98%** of households with children were under the poverty line. Adequate income support rates are imperative for people to be able to maintain a basic standard of living.

For people with limited financial resources and living under the poverty line, short-term high interest loans are highly accessible as a quick fix to immediate financial difficulties. The Salvation Army's Economic and Social Impact Survey (ESIS) report highlighted that **nearly half** of respondents sold goods to pawn brokers and **60%** borrowed money from family and friends. These temporary measures are highly problematic for people on low incomes to repay, resulting in high interest penalties spiralling them further into debt. The Salvation Army remains concerned that payday lenders take advantage of and exploit people in situations of financial hardship. The Salvation Army calls for government to finalise and pass the *National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Small Amount Credit Contract and Consumer Lease Reforms) Bill 2018*, to further regulate the payday lending sector and ensure further consumer protections for financially vulnerable Australians.

*"I was just borrowing money off people all the time, then finding myself back in the same predicament when it was payday time." – TSA ESIS Respondent*

*"I sell personal items or put them on loan, or get cash loans to be able to afford living." – TSA ESIS Respondent*

vi. The impact of economic development in different locations and geography;

Geography

In regional and rural areas there is often not the availability and opportunities of a vibrant job market compared to city areas. Housing costs to live in the city have become unaffordable, and as a result many people have been forced to the regional areas in search for cheaper housing. However, this also means that there are fewer job opportunities in these areas. For people on low incomes, this creates further financial burdens and imposes additional barriers for those seeking work in the inner city areas due to the cost and availability of public transport, increased fuel and vehicle costs, and longer travel times.

Economic development and job creation can still be problematic in areas closer to city centres. The City of Logan is approximately 50 km to Brisbane, although is one of Queensland's most disadvantaged areas with high rates of unemployment, financial hardship and crimes rates, and recording poor social, educational and health outcomes for children. Increased resources and local plans have been implemented to target and improve social outcomes for the people of Logan. However, in this area there remains limited employment opportunities (particularly for youth), poor infrastructure and low prospects for economic growth.

Skills shift

The downturn in the mining industry has resulted in increased rates of unemployment in the sector. Jobs with mining industry skillsets are no longer readily available, and without retraining, do not offer new prospects. The development of appropriate and meaningful work opportunities, up-skilling and capacity building are crucial for people to become re-deployed into other sectors.

Labour market

Not everyone looking for employment is ready or has the capacity to work full-time. A more flexible labour market and working arrangements accommodating personal circumstances, work readiness and family commitments is needed. Transitional work arrangements would provide people with different work options from supported volunteering, part-time and full-time employment; catering to meet their needs.

Additional subsidies and realistic incentives for employers, may address some of the existing barriers to employment. For example, additional financial assistance for income support recipients to access education and training, coverage of transport costs to training and work, subsidising of housing in higher employment areas, increased benefits and flexible arrangements for quality childcare may alleviate some of the practical challenges people experience when looking for work.

Temporary employment

A pathway back into full-time work may involve several attempts at re-engaging on a part-time or casual basis. During this time, there can be multiple disruptions to income support payments, causing financial uncertainty and hardship for people in this position. Applying for income support can be onerous, with a large amount of paperwork and forms to be completed, mutual obligation requirements to comply with, and there can be lengthy delays awaiting income support payments and other entitlements to be received. This only exacerbates a sense of financial strain, stress and risks compromising people's ability to maintain an adequate standard of living and stable housing.



## PART C. Recommend options for:

### i. Breaking cycles of disadvantage;

The Salvation Army supports individuals, families and communities who experience hardship, poverty and exclusion. The Salvation Army works with individuals and families who, due to adverse life circumstances and experiences, are disadvantaged by compromised capabilities and opportunities to fully participate in the community.

#### Investing in people

The Salvation Army embraces the strongly held theological principle that “work” is vital to a sense of value and self-worth, contributing to society and engaging with others in building community. The Salvation Army invests in the lives of unemployed people to help them to find employment where possible. Unfortunately not everyone can engage in employment. Many people in our community face severe economic and social disadvantage, impacted by complex needs that place them at the margins of our communities.

The Salvation Army recognises that people who are disadvantaged and have complex needs require an investment of time, resources and commitment to support them. This has driven a change in the way that The Salvation Army delivers Emergency Relief support. Recognising that many people who access our Emergency Relief service are in intergenerational poverty situations, The Salvation Army provides extra support to those people through Doorways casework. Doorways caseworkers provide holistic case management, practical support, and make referrals to other services.

During 2016/17, The Salvation Army engaged URBIS to undertake an independent evaluation of Doorways case management approach. The final report identified client outcomes (965 research respondents) including:

- 83% agreed or strongly agreed their work with a caseworker enabled them to better provide food for themselves and their families
- 77% now understood and were able to better access services independently
- 76% were better able to cope with personal circumstances
- 74% had reduced stress and anxiety
- 58% better managed with budget and finances
- 57% learned more skills and building confidence to help me handle difficult situations
- 22% were able to look for a job because of assistance from The Salvation Army.

These results show the value of investing time with people and journeying alongside those needing assistance.

As a further demonstration of our commitment to investing in people, The Salvation Army contributes more than \$20 million of internally generated funds per year to support people receiving Commonwealth funded Emergency Relief support. Through this investment in services and people, we see enormous value and return on investment as people are supported to address their needs and seek ways out of crisis. For The Salvation Army, this demonstrates the importance and urgent need for an adequate income support system. If payments were adequate, some of these funds could be redirected from Emergency Relief systems into other strategies. For example, further prevention and early intervention initiatives, practical support for families, increasing financial resilience and many other activities, which are demonstrated to be effective in transforming lives.

A greater investment in people on the lowest incomes would not only save money in the future but would bring qualitative benefits to the whole community and the financial return on this investment would be exponential.



### Investing in client participation and feedback

Improved client participation mechanisms to capture feedback are critical to build a picture of best practice models, and to inform improvements that will shape future service delivery. Community consultation could be used to better understand the lived experience of poverty and disadvantage, pathways out of hardship and to explore ideas and responses to local issues, including employment and job creation.

### Investing in innovation

The Salvation Army welcomes trials, pilots and innovative projects that have the latitude to explore new options and work towards creating an evidence base for what works.

### Investing in employment pathways

The Salvation Army strongly supports policy directions and service models that emphasise employability. Meaningful work experience should provide employment skills, opportunities and pathways, and be undertaken in partnership with local communities to encourage the development of local employment initiatives, networks and support.

Investment in the labour market, career transition schemes and creating meaningful jobs in local areas is a vital step towards increased workforce participation for people experiencing disadvantage and multiple employment barriers. Providing training programs and initiatives, skills development and capacity building opportunities develops the capabilities of people and prepares them for the workforce. The provision of more flexible and part-time work options are crucial to provide people with families the opportunity to work, along with more affordable and high quality childcare options.

### Investing in financial capabilities and resilience building

The Salvation Army's *Moneycare* program delivers financial counselling, financial capability services, financial literacy/capability education and training and no interest loans. *Moneycare* has had considerable success in recognising and supporting people in vulnerable circumstances. Most clients that we work with are also dealing with multiple and complex issues. Our practice is to deliver holistic, integrated, wrap-around services that not only seek to address the current crisis, but also work towards building longer term capability and resilience. Our services are focused on people who are in vulnerable circumstances most at risk of financial and social exclusion and disadvantage. *Moneycare* supports people to overcome debt and provides education and tools to relieve some of the pressures arising from debt and financial hardship.

*"I was in a very overwhelming situation. Thank you for helping and guiding me through this difficult time. I was in a very bad place until I came to The Salvation Army's Moneycare, as I was so worried about my financial circumstances. I couldn't eat or sleep as I was worried all the time. Now that everything has been sorted and with your help I am able to manage my payments. Thank you." – Moneycare client feedback*

### Investing in early intervention and prevention

The Salvation Army has had great success delivering early intervention and prevention programs through placed-based, integrated service delivery approaches in partnership with other service providers. This strategy reduces barriers to accessing programs, provides a soft entry point for people and an opportunity for clients to build relationships with other services. For example, The Salvation Army in South Australia, Ingle Farm is the Facilitating Partner for Salisbury Communities for Children and with the Lutheran Community Care to run the *FamilyZone Hub*, an innovative and progressive model of engagement with families with children at risk of abuse or neglect.

Program evaluations have highlighted:

*“The community hub strategy is based on evidence that in socio-economically disadvantaged communities, coordinated approaches across sectors can improve social and educational outcomes for children in the pathway to school and families can receive more comprehensive parenting support within a ‘one stop shop’ approach”.*

**See appendix 5 – Family Activity Centre Model: approach to early intervention and prevention**

ii. **Measuring the effectiveness of evidence-based interventions;**

Frameworks

In partnership with Centre for Social Impact (CSI), The Salvation Army has developed a Social Outcomes Measurement Framework to ensure a consistent approach to research, evaluation, measuring change, gaining insights into the effectiveness of programs and collective impact. This knowledge facilitates learning, sharing of best practice, and guides services improvements for greater social impact.<sup>7</sup> The Salvation Army supports outcome based measurement rather than focusing on throughputs, outputs and key performance indicators to determine change, effectiveness, outcome and/or impact.

Incorporate System Thinking and the Theory of Change in the evaluation design

When planning for an evaluation to measure the effectiveness of interventions or collective impact initiatives that aim to solve complex and persistent social issues, the government department (or the evaluator) should take into consideration the:

- Pathways to achieving the targeted outcomes
- Different timeframe of which individual outcomes are likely to be achieved
- Promoters and barriers to producing the intended outcomes within the system where the intervention operates.

This knowledge can be drawn from the development of a Theory of Change model for the intervention or initiative. This provides a comprehensive description (or the logic) of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context, the interactions between different players in the system and how they could influence the generation of outcomes, and the conditions that must be realised for a set of outcomes to be achieved at a particular timeframe.

Examples of Theory of Change can be found in this link:

- [http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco\\_library/pdf/HungerProjectTheoryofChangeGlobal.pdf](http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/HungerProjectTheoryofChangeGlobal.pdf)
- [http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco\\_library/pdf/School\\_Readiness\\_TOC.pdf](http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/School_Readiness_TOC.pdf)
- [http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco\\_library/pdf/Superwomen\\_Example.pdf](http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/Superwomen_Example.pdf)

A good theory of change can help to refine the evaluation questions and scope of evaluation<sup>8</sup> by providing better understanding of the:

- Issues that are being addressed by the intervention/s and what are the intended outcomes and impact
- Role of individual service providers and other stakeholders in supporting clients to achieve the outcomes
- Implication of contextual factors such as the geographical, socioeconomic conditions (e.g. economic growth, employment rate, housing affordability), government policies, local infrastructure and resources (e.g. access to transportation, available funding), and organisational

situations, in supporting or hindering a service provider's ability to support clients in achieving the intended outcomes or impact

- Changes that may need to happen within the intervention design or service delivery model due to the changes in the contextual factors or lesson learned
- Boundaries and scope of the evaluation (e.g. feasible outcomes to be realised and measured within the available evaluation timeframe and resources).

Participation and/or feedback from different stakeholders in developing the Theory of Change, including perspectives of clients, would further help to capture the dynamic/interactions of clients with players within the system, identify needs or issues that have not been addressed, and the boundaries of the evaluation<sup>9</sup>.

All of this knowledge would strengthen the evaluation design that can accurately measure if, how and to what extent an intervention, a policy or a collective impact initiative has worked to address persistent social issues; why certain outcomes or impacts have been achieved or could not be achieved within evaluation or funding timeframe; and how to improve the intervention or the system to increase likelihood to achieve intended outcomes or impact.

For instance, The Salvation Army's Emergency Relief program (*Doorways*) provides financial and material assistance and casework to clients to address their immediate hardship and build capacity to resolve the underlying issues causing the hardship. Even though the "finding employment" outcome is stated as one of the key outcomes for DSS financial wellbeing and capability grants as well as the welfare policy, this outcome might not be realised as an immediate outcome for most Doorways clients who came from disadvantaged and vulnerable background.<sup>10,11</sup> Our pilot outcomes measurement instead found that the Doorways program contributed to achieving the prerequisites/preconditions to employment, such as addressing an immediate crisis situation, increased individual capability to address and manage a crisis situation, and increased economic resources and social capital. These outcomes contributed to increasing the readiness of clients to participate in employment-related activities such as training, volunteering and finding and gaining employment. Therefore, the effectiveness of the Doorways program should not be defined by the number of people obtaining employment (this outcome is more suitable for a job-seeker agency). Rather, it should be defined by its ability to increase client's capacity to participate and contribute into Australian society through education, volunteering, peer supports and forms of unpaid employment.

#### Participatory approach to measuring effectiveness

The design and implementation of evaluation frameworks for measuring the effectiveness of evidence-based interventions should be guided by the "participatory evaluation" approach. Participatory evaluation is a partnership approach to evaluation in which stakeholders actively engage in developing the evaluation and all phases of its implementation<sup>12</sup>.

The projects that The Salvation Army has undertaken in developing its outcomes measurement system is guided by the principles of "participatory evaluation". Based on the learnings from this project, The Salvation Army strongly advocates that the measurement framework and instruments should be co-designed with key stakeholders, particularly the frontline staff. Further, the criteria for effectiveness (i.e. what success looks like, target outcomes and impact) and the evaluation goals should also be informed by the frontline workers and the clients affected by the issues. Early inclusion of the frontline staff and people who access our services adds significant value to the evaluation process. It helps frontline staff to understand the value of evaluation to their work and gains their support. It also assists evaluators to understand what "effectiveness" means to clients and service providers, thus being able to present the evaluation goals and measurable outcomes in a way that is relevant and meaningful to frontline staff and

clients. The engagement of frontline staff with clients would also help to identify problems and risks early and resolve them, such as addressing factors that hinder participation, adapting the evaluation process to be more appropriate to a culturally diverse group or to a vulnerable group, and addressing misperceptions of evaluations by clients and staff. Involving frontline staff in the evaluation design would also help the evaluator to understand how findings can be communicated back to frontline staff and clients to promote learning, strengthen service delivery, and ensure seamless integration of evaluation outcomes into “business-as-usual” to minimise additional workload and fatigue to staff and clients. This understanding will help the evaluator to design an evaluation process that can also be used as a timely feedback-loop to increase the agility and effectiveness of the evidence-based interventions.

### iii. The improvement of the financial capacity and security of families; and

The Salvation Army offers financial capacity building support services through our *Doorways* Emergency Relief, *Moneycare* Financial Counselling and Capability programs, *Communities for Children* (CfC), and *Parenting Support* programs. Our programs promote open access models, support early intervention, integrated services and holistic wrap around approaches. Our services focus on client capacity building and working towards financial independence.

The Salvation Army aims to engage families experiencing financial difficulty impacted by situational poverty and those underemployed to access services as early as possible. Targeting families early and stabilising them before they enter a debt spiral optimises the chances of making a significant difference. In this context our services are able to respond to immediate crisis needs of clients, and provide a pathway to a deeper engagement through the provision of case management, financial counselling, mentoring and referrals. This assists people to build connections and attempts to reduce the number of people experiencing entrenched poverty and dependence on government benefits.

The Salvation Army operate *Moneycare* financial counselling and capability programs nationally. The goal is for people to develop longer term capability to effectively mitigate negative financial impacts and make better choices on financial matters in their lives. The program assists people to move from financial hardship to stability and independence and is an opportunity to connect with other services to meet their specific needs. It is recognised that while some clients only require a one-off, brief intervention, others need more attention over a longer period in order to stabilise their circumstances and get their lives back on track. While financial independence is the goal for all clients, the pathway is longer and more complicated for some.

*“I am now debt free for the first time in many years. The financial counsellor’s dedication and commitment has been far beyond any expectations and I am forever grateful for her patience and kindness in every session and discussions we had. Thanks to Moneycare I am now able to move forward and improve my life.”*  
– *Moneycare client feedback*

### See appendix 6 – Moneycare case study

The Salvation Army’s approach is evidence-based and built on research undertaken in the sector. *I wish I’d known sooner*<sup>13</sup> – *The impact of Financial Counselling on Debt Resolution and Personal Wellbeing* and *Time Trust Respect*<sup>14</sup> – *Case Management in Emergency Relief*, Adelaide University research *Paying it forward – Cost benefit analysis of the Wyatt Trust Funded Financial Counselling Services*<sup>15</sup>. These key research pieces have informed our practice and consolidated our approaches. They support the principle that the delivery of our services are relational, integrated, informed by a capacity building framework, are all critical elements in delivering services that work, are effective, and make a difference in assisting clients to achieve long-term outcomes.

#### iv. Better coordinating services between tiers of government to support families; and

The Salvation Army welcomes a whole-of-government approach to support families. Improved communication, coordination and intersection between federal, state and local government departments is required to create a system that operates strategically, and works in partnership to deliver positive long-term outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable families. Effective communication with built-in mechanisms for regular liaison is critical.

More flexible funding arrangements with the scope to deliver innovative services targeted to meet local need are required. Developing more effective and coordinated approaches to support families will in turn reduce duplication, create shared vision and values, provide best value for money, and promote improved and more sustained outcomes for families. The facilitating partner, community ground-up approach is a positive example of a flexible response to local community need and what works to make a significant difference for children and their families.

#### PART D. Consider any other related matter.

##### Conditionality

The Salvation Army acknowledges that the UK has employed a conditionality model since the 1990s, with welfare recipient groups subject to additional requirements in order for them to receive government payments. However, welfare conditionality in the UK has a strong focus on compliance, rather than improved outcomes for participants.<sup>16</sup>

The Salvation Army does not support increased conditionality and opposes measures such as compulsory drug testing programs, enforced school attendance and payment suspensions. Compelling those on income support benefits to comply with additional and rigid requirements in order to receive welfare benefits is a punitive response. It is questionable whether increased conditionality is an effective measure to reduce welfare dependence, and unclear whether it produces sustained and positive outcomes. Dwyer (2018) highlighted that “benefit sanctions do little to enhance people’s motivation to prepare for, seek, or enter paid work”. For some income support recipients, it made their personal and financial circumstances worse.

The Salvation Army maintains that imposing benefit sanctions does not act as an incentive for jobseekers on income support benefits to find work. It unjustly places the responsibility of unemployment solely on an individual, rather than acknowledging any structural barriers or the actual conditions of the labour market that precludes many people from the workforce.

It is of concern that many jobseekers are required to contend with mutual obligation requirements, ultimately forcing many people into short term, low paid, unstable and insecure temporary jobs. Instead, The Salvation Army promotes a more flexible model that provides appropriate and longer term support for people to engage in training with a view to gaining meaningful employment. This is crucial to support longer term positive outcomes and sustained change for people on income support benefits, rather than contending with enforced benefit sanctions.

##### Removing access to cash - Cashless debit card

The Salvation Army opposes compulsory income and financial management policies and punitive measures that restrict how income support recipients spend their benefits. Imposing a cashless welfare card system removes the opportunity for people’s financial independence and decision making. Furthermore, it removes an individual’s basic Human Rights of dignity, self-determination and social freedom. People on income support are less likely to have a financial buffer in case of emergency, and removing access to cash could lead to people becoming further impoverished. The Salvation Army also opposes the expansion of the cashless debit card pilots. If particularly disadvantaged areas and community members willingly and

voluntarily agree to participate in the cashless debit card trials, this is their prerogative and not for others to decide, or the government to enforce.

The Salvation Army welcomes fresh and innovative approaches to assist and support disadvantaged and marginalised communities and to promote community wellbeing and community safety. The Salvation Army commends the government's commitment to community consultation and engagement with those communities genuinely interested in participating in future cashless debit card trial sites, seeking voluntary participation in this controversial income management approach. Furthermore, The Salvation Army supports the government's co-design approaches to ensure any trial sites are specifically tailored to the localised area and to meet the community need. However, this approach needs to be balanced by adequately funding social and community support services to deliver early intervention, prevention and therapeutic services. The Salvation Army would welcome a more encompassing community approach in order to tackle the underlying complex social issues of poverty and welfare dependence.

#### Auctorial / Investment approach

New Zealand's welfare investment model is now under review. With limited evaluation of this type of model, it is difficult to say whether people benefit from this approach or if it is really just a cost saving exercise for government.

The Salvation Army supports investment into effective and evidence-based services that help people to build financial capacity, resilience and independence, but remains concerned about an auctorial approach to welfare that only focuses on cost cutting. Any new welfare reform agenda needs to concentrate on long-term positive outcomes for disadvantaged and financially vulnerable people. An informed decision can be reached when further feedback, evaluations and longitudinal research about investment approaches are available.

#### Combatting structural disadvantage

Poverty and disadvantage continues to affect millions of Australians. The Salvation Army supports the development of a national plan to focus on the growing rates of poverty and inequality in Australia. A whole-of-government led approach in partnership with the community sector is urgently needed to tackle the structural and underlying issues of entrenched poverty and persistent disadvantage.

#### In summary

In summary, The Salvation Army urges the Committee to consider and respect the specific needs of the most disadvantaged Australians. Commitment and leadership, strong vision and appropriate social policy platforms from the Federal Government are required to effectively address persistent disadvantage and entrenched poverty. A one-size-fits-all approach is not effective, whereby increased conditionality and punitive responses are not the solution. For many people who access Salvation Army services, additional supports are required to ensure that individuals and families have their needs adequately met and have sufficient income support and benefits to maintain a basic standard of living. This is currently not the case.

The Salvation Army strongly advocates for policy directions that remove barriers and provide resources that allow individuals to build their skills and increase their financial resilience. In addition, The Salvation Army supports policy directions and investment into practical programs that enable individuals to gain education or skills to increase their capability and capacity to be able to seek and secure sustainable employment.

The Salvation Army recognises that in the current economic climate, there is a need for trade-offs and tough choices. Nevertheless, we strongly oppose changes that will further disrespect and disadvantage those who are already significantly marginalised. It is very unlikely that shifting people to lower rates of income support will increase their workforce participation. On the contrary, such a shift will increase the incidence and the entrenchment of poverty, further destabilising households, and hindering peoples' ability

to secure sustainable employment as evidenced in various senate submissions and campaigns from community and business sectors calling, for example, for a \$75 a week increase to the Newstart Allowance.

Inadequate income support and restrictions that fail to sufficiently provide for the basic needs of individuals and families risks simply shifting the problem to the community sector. The Salvation Army has seen increased demand for services, especially those providing emergency relief and material aid, as a response to these changes. The Salvation Army is very concerned about the capacity to meet continuing growth in need.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ACOSS\\_JA\\_Faces-of-Unemployment\\_14-September-2018\\_web.pdf](https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ACOSS_JA_Faces-of-Unemployment_14-September-2018_web.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Perales, F., Higginson, A., Baxter, J., Western, M., Zubrick, S., & Mitrou, F. (2018) Intergenerational dependency on welfare: A review of the literature. ARC. Accessed on 11 September 2018, at <https://www.lifecoursecentre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2014-09-LCC-Working-Paper-Perales-Higginson-Baxter-Western-Zubrick-Mitrou.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [http://carersaustralia.com.au/storage/Supporting%20Families%20Supporting%20Young%20Carers\\_2009.pdf](http://carersaustralia.com.au/storage/Supporting%20Families%20Supporting%20Young%20Carers_2009.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Heckman, J. (2018). Accessed on 4 September 2018, at <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/research-summary-lifecycle-benefits-influential-early-childhood-program/>

<sup>5</sup> Median per person, rounded to the nearest dollar.

<sup>6</sup> Median per person, rounded to the nearest dollar.

<sup>7</sup> Bennett, S., Etuk, L., & Noone, J. (2016). Social Outcomes and Impact Measurement Framework: For the Social Program Department Research Team, The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory, Framework, Sydney: Centre for Social Impact.

<sup>8</sup> Manager's guide to evaluation. Accessed on 6 September 2018, at <https://www.betterevaluation.org/lt/node/5280>

<sup>9</sup> Manager's guide to evaluation. Accessed on 6 September 2018, at <https://www.betterevaluation.org/lt/node/5280>

<sup>10</sup> Kurti, L., Tomiczek, C., & Martin, A. (2017) Doorways Outcomes Measurement Project: Final Report. Urbis, Sydney.

<sup>11</sup> The Salvation Army (2018) Economic and Social Impact Survey 2018: Feeling the Pinch. The Salvation Army, Blackburn, Victoria.

<sup>12</sup> Zukoski, A. & Luluquisen, M. (2002) Participatory Evaluation: What is it? Why do it? What are the challenges? Policy & Practice: Partnership for the Public's Health, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Brackertz, N. (2012). I wish I'd known sooner! The impact of Financial Counselling on Debt Resolution and Personal Wellbeing, Swinburne University of Technology and The Salvation Army.

<sup>14</sup> Brackertz, N. (2014). Time Trust, Respect. Case Management in Emergency Relief: The Doorways Model. Swinburne University of Technology and The Salvation Army.

<sup>15</sup> <http://wyatt.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Wyatt-WISer-Financial-Counselling-Cost-Benefit-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Dwyer, P. J. (2018). Final findings: Overview: Research Briefing for the Welfare Conditionality: Sanctions, Support and Behaviour Change project. University of York: Welfare Conditionality: Sanctions Support and Behaviour Change Project. Accessed on 31 August 2018, at [http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/40414\\_Overview-HR4.pdf](http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/40414_Overview-HR4.pdf)



## Appendix 1 – Example: Communities for Children (CfC) Facilitating Partners Logan

As depicted below Communities for Children (CfC) Facilitating Partners Logan, is engaging the community within three distinct yet intimately connected spaces. The Core Group is comprised of the key organisations and community stakeholders with whom the CfC FP collaborates with in order to achieve our objectives, including those identified as Community Partners. The Core Group represents the community entities that play a significant role in supporting the children and families of Logan, whether through employment, health services, family support services, early learning or cultural identity.

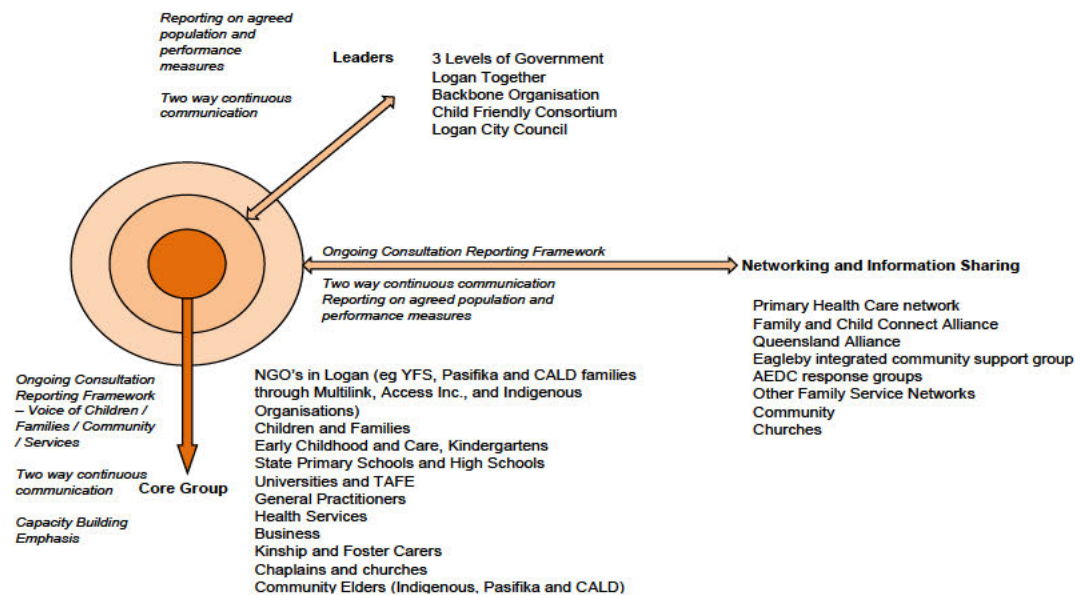


Figure 1 Communities for Children (CfC) Facilitating Partners Logan – community engagement

Research indicates that it is only by working together that services are able to connect with and continue to engage with those hard-to-reach subsections of the community. Indeed, the current CfC service delivery hub, *The Family Place*, operating in the heart of Logan, is currently engaging different facets of the community through a collaborative family centred community space that is welcoming and easy to access. The strategic framework underpinning service delivery in *The Family Place* fosters integrated partnerships between local organisations and community groups that extend beyond the delivery of co-located services. This model demonstrates the success of intentional co-creation, co-design and co-delivery of services by multiple stakeholders, working together to share resources, knowledge and expertise as a support team for the community.

Given the organic way in which Logan Together has been gaining momentum in the community over the last few years, as well as the growing discontent among the Logan Community with our collective failure to address the issues of social disadvantage in Logan historically, the time is right for a different way of engaging with the community. The improved outcomes that follow this kind of collaborative practice will lead a fundamental shift in the way that we collaborate as a community across multiple levels within the family and children service system. It is through a commitment by organisations to the Logan Charter that encourages engagement with all parts of our community and underpin impending cultural change in the way that we approach social disadvantage as a collective in Logan into the future.



# Growing our Mob Strong

September-December 2015



## Background

The Department of Human Services (DHS) was seeking a way to make contacts with families under the Supporting Jobless Families and Helping Young Parents Programs culturally safe and genuinely helpful.

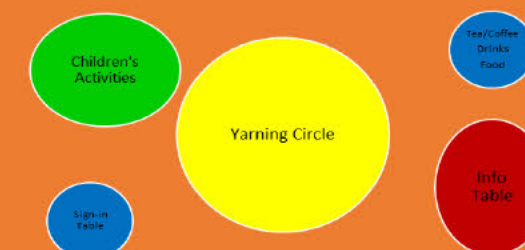
Utilising the Collective Impact Framework DHS partnered with 22 government and non-government organisations to develop an overarching shared agenda and commitment to working together for these families.

A steering committee was formed to build on the idea of Logan stakeholders holding “events” in a “Yarn Up “ style for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families providing them with information and linking them to appropriate services in a safe community environment. Partners funded this work from existing resources. There was no “new” funding. Much of what was achieved was through “in kind” contributions.

We are tremendously grateful for the generosity and patience of the Elders of Logan, who participated in these events and guided us through the process.

The key features of these events:

- Located in spaces recognised by families as safe and non-threatening
- Had a family fun day feel that celebrates strengths
- Educational and fun activities for children which mirror a kindy morning and existing targeted playgroups including healthy food
- Information for parents delivered in a yarnning style, using strengths based conversation and supported by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Framework
- Elder led/supported. Elders chose to facilitate the event or to open the event with an acknowledgement and story and then supported conversations with families
- Local services available to provide expert information and connections in a relaxed way during yarnning circle discussions, as parents arrived or after the sessions over food. Care was taken to ensure there were not more services than parents.
- Grassroots discussions that provided families with options and pathways to prepare their children for the future, including formal and informal early years services
- Information table with takeaway resources that support the topics covered in yarnning circle discussion.





## Outcomes

Over 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families attended workshops and connected with each other, Elders and services between September and December in 2015.

These families overwhelmingly reported the events worked for them. Parents and children had fun, felt relaxed and safe – and learnt a lot about what was available to support them.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders were able to yarn with many families who had been disconnected from local cultural networks. They built relationships, reignited passion, shared their experiences and culture and helped influence the future generations.

Indigenous Kindy full!!!! Burragah Kindy commenced 2016 with a full enrolment of 22 children and a large number of children on a waiting list. In previous years they commenced with 7-12 children.

A new partnership has been formed between Burragah Kindy, Kingston Creche and Kindergarten (C&K) and a Loganlea Long Day Care, to provide places for an additional 22 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Kingston and Eagleby C&Ks have commenced the year with higher than previous enrolments. Kingston has opened a third Kindergarten session in 2016 and is filling a fourth.

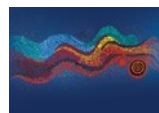
Through the Growing Our Mob Up Strong events Ganyjuu identified a large group of children who had not attended any Kindy program in 2015 and were commencing Prep in 2016. As a result they ran a Get Set for Prep style Holiday Program. The program was attended by 20 – 40 children daily.

Mob Connectors also reported their school holiday programs, which are run for both children and their families, and assist with school readiness, were full.

Mums and Bubs received over 12 new referrals with several of these being “very valuable client contacts”.

Elders reported that families who recently moved to Logan were linked with local elders and culturally safe services.

Two parents have confirmed TAFE enrolment for 2016



During discussion about culture a mum shared that her brother was an Indigenous Artist. Communities for Children and Gunya Meta have facilitated this young man gaining a contract for artwork for the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Staff from the Early Years Centre were impressed with the work experience of a mum who attended. They helped her to update her resume to effectively reflect her capabilities and worked with her to build up her confidence. She now has a job!



## Who Was Involved?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders from across  
Logan  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health  
Communities for Children  
Crèche and Kindergarten Association  
Department of Human Services  
Education Queensland  
Kingston, Mable Park and Eagleby State Schools  
Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Perspective in Early Childhood Education  
Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Perspectives in Schools  
Early Years Centre  
Ganyjuu  
Gunya Meta

Griffith Uni  
Kingston East Neighbourhood Group  
Logan Libraries  
Mob Connectors  
Numbelli Elders  
TAFE  
The Family Place  
Twin Rivers  
Wesley Mission  
Benevolent Society  
Children's Health Queensland  
Child and Family Centre

## Feedback from Parents

“Creates a comfortable and informal environment. Fantastic opportunity for mothers to find out about support services that are available, especially in the indigenous community.”

“I loved the fact we could bring our children to play with other children. And there was a lot of conversations and very useful information. I would love to do this instead of going into Centrelink.”

“Awesome time. They should always have meetings like this. I had fun meeting new people, it was a good time.”

“I found information I have been wondering about. Now I know where and what to do. Thank you.”

“I think it worked well. Bountiful info, you feel more comfortable and having the elders and Aunties present...wonderful.”



### Appendix 3

#### **Children's University program – example of engaging children and their families in learning and education**

In Tasmania, The Salvation Army's Communities for Children (CfC) deliver the *Children's University* program. This is an international initiative that aims to raise aspirations and self-belief, foster curiosity and a love of learning, boost achievement, broaden horizons, and improve life chances.

Children's University supports the significant difference that education can make, especially for children from disadvantaged communities. In the short term, the program enhances children's enjoyment of learning outside the classroom, with ripple effects occurring within their schooling. In the long term, the program has the capacity to influence the future qualifications and skill levels of young people and improve their life chances.

Core to the Children's University program and integral to achieving these aims is enabling children and their families to access learning experiences at the University of Tasmania campus and *Learning Destinations* in the community. These valuable experiences allow children and their families to learn together, broadening their horizons, increasing child-family connectedness, and building families' relationships with higher education and the wider community.

The extracurricular learning undertaken by children each year through the Children's University program is celebrated at annual graduation ceremonies in each region. Children wear academic caps and gowns to attend their own graduation ceremony to receive certificates in recognition of their participation in extracurricular learning. The *Children's University* graduation is a powerful experience for children and their families where the University and community come together to celebrate the children's achievements, positively influencing their aspirations, self-belief and sense of achievement.

#### **Appendix 4 – My Start Program - Overview**

The aim of the *My Start* program is to improve outcomes for children and families through supporting parents to re-engage in education and training. Providing this educational opportunity for the parents will improve their probability of gaining employment, enhance their social and cultural capital and increase their appreciation for education – all improving outcomes for their children.

The *My Start* program consists of three specifically chosen units from a nationally accredited qualification, designed to support parents (mums and dads) to develop basic employability skills, gain practical work experience, and develop a Career and Learning Action Plan with SMART goals. The parents are supported to undertake 20 hours of volunteering during the program. This provides real work experience and the opportunity for the application of their skills and knowledge, increasing confidence and social connectivity.

The program is delivered at the local primary school, where the parent's child is attending. This provides a safe and familiar learning environment that is accessible for the parents – reducing potential barriers to participation. Delivery is in a group setting for 10 - 15 participants over a 10 week period. The sessions are four hours, one day per week within school hours.

#### **Outcomes**

During 2017, TSA Tasmania Communities for Children (CfC) delivered the *My Start* Program with Gagebrook and Herdsman's Cove Primary School parents, in the Brighton Region. Feedback from the parents and the school staff was extremely positive. Both schools were keen to be able to offer this program again, as they noticed positive improvement for parents; especially increased levels of self-confidence. The schools are very committed to continue to engage parents and are working on ideas of programs they can offer until they can undertake further study.

Two parents are now employed as teacher's assistants, with many others continuing as volunteers. Outcomes achieved (final feedback obtained from 10 participants):

- 80% reported increased self-confidence
- 60% developed new networks
- Increased aspiration and motivation to continue learning pathway
  - ✓ 3 x enrolled in Cert III in Education Support
  - ✓ 1 x studying Community Services
  - ✓ 6 x want to continue onto Certificate II in Community Services
- 30% gained employment
- 100% continued volunteering
- Developed employment skills/ volunteer experience
- Established networks/new friends
- Improved study/learning skills.

Each participating school requested their graduation ceremony be held as part of the school assembly to ensure everyone celebrated their success. This was also a fantastic opportunity for positive role-modelling and celebrating the value of life-long learning.

#### **Responses from graduates when asked “What did you enjoy most about the program?”**

*“Getting new skills, meeting new people, different door of opportunity. Keen to keep volunteering in the school and further skills to obtain teacher's aide role”. (Lesley)*

*“Getting to know more people and getting more confidence.” (Sally H)*

*“Learning new skills. Having the opportunity to sit the course has given me more independence and confidence.” (Sally C)*

*“Making friends.” (Natalie)*

*“Kate [Trainer] is an amazing lady and makes things achievable.” (Natasha)*



## The Family Activity Centre approach to early intervention and prevention



Children Communities Connections Learning Network



## **The Family Activity Centre approach to Early Intervention and Prevention**

Many families are at risk of vulnerability as they attempt to deal with a complex array of problems which have often come about through generational trauma, abuse and neglect. In 2005 a Family Activity Centre was developed as a result of community and family support services consultations conducted by Salisbury Communities for Children.

FamilyZone Ingle Farm Hub is an innovative and progressive model of engagement with families with children at risk of abuse or neglect. It promotes integrated support facilitated by a number of professionals and agencies operating in a co-located space (one-stop shop concept). It is underpinned by a single entry point 'no-wrong-door' approach that provides 'soft entry' for stressed/isolated families. This approach at FamilyZone aims to avoid stigmatisation of families at risk of vulnerability. It also helps with engagement when working with hard to reach populations and provides an important entry point to more specialised services.

A universal service setting requires coordination between services so that problems such as impending homelessness, mental or physical illness and delays in children's development are identified and comprehensively addressed (McInnes & Diamond, 2011). The 'one stop shop' model is particularly beneficial for implementing perinatal support which assists parents with mental health, family violence and related needs. Coordination depends on open communication, shared understandings of the integrated service environment as well as positive relationships between the different professionals who have day to day contact with families.

### **AIFS Promising Practice Profile**

"The success of FamilyZone is achieved through provision of integrated services in a family friendly and responsive environment that facilitates 'seamless transitions'. While the governance arrangements provide a foundation for service delivery, it is the principles that inform that service delivery which are considered the key contributing elements" (Promising Practice Profile, p4)

These are listed as:

- Family centred and holistic approach
- Establishment of strong links with state and local government departments
- Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary
- Subcontracting provision of key services to established local service providers
- Cross cultural competence
- Facilitating access to different groups that operate in the hub
- Co-location of services
- Unlimited access timeframe
- Perception of workers as friends

[http://www3.aifs.gov.au/institute/cafcappp/ppp/profiles/pppdocs/cfc\\_familyzone.pdf](http://www3.aifs.gov.au/institute/cafcappp/ppp/profiles/pppdocs/cfc_familyzone.pdf)

An evaluation has focused on the experiences of families at FamilyZone to determine the effectiveness of the services provided. Parents and caregivers were asked if they thought they were better off because of their involvement at FamilyZone. The report showed that "there is clear evidence that FamilyZone Hub is meeting its objectives of providing an environment which is supportive of child-friendly and inclusive communities, effective service coordination for children and families and improvements in children's development and well-being and positive family relationships" (McInnes & Diamond, 2011, p6).

*"The community hub strategy is based on evidence that in socio-economically disadvantaged communities, coordinated approaches across sectors can improve social and educational outcomes for children in the pathway to school and families can receive more comprehensive parenting support within a 'one stop shop' approach".*

The Family Activity Centre approach to early intervention and prevention also facilitates prevention of child abuse and neglect by bringing together a range of universal & targeted support services for families. It provides a family friendly environment which engages a broad range of families including those most at risk of poor developmental outcomes. Families are engaged through a number of pathways including referrals, hospital screening protocols, refugee settlement programs, word of mouth, social media and internet browsing. Parents make a very significant contribution to the way services are designed and delivered. A 'no wrong door' entry policy and exit points with warm referral processes are key elements of effective centres.

Typically a Family Activity Centre may facilitate:

- a range of playgroups,
- perinatal support groups for parents at risk of PND,
- parent groups,
- soft entry activities such as cooking and sewing,
- CALD support activities,
- home visiting programs,
- volunteer and early childhood leadership training is being facilitated,
- co-located NGO and government department activities.
- Satellite outreach activities into surrounding suburbs. (Brettig, 2015)

In the period January-July 2015 FamilyZone had 1,259 contacts with families including 567 CALD (including Afghani, African & Vietnamese) and 49 Indigenous. Some of these involved several visits per week and some several per year depending on the complexity of the issues involved. An interagency, multi and trans-disciplinary team co-ordinates the various activities developed to enhance wellbeing & resilience in young families.

A short film illustrating the work of the FamilyZone team can be found at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yn1qhzVjTE&t=6s>



The following case study of Tessa demonstrates the intensity of support provided to a family through this model at FamilyZone where this is needed. It reflects the benefits of integrated service provision at Family Zone, the nature of 'wrap around' services needed for complex cases presenting at a Family Activity Centre and also the value of targeted and mainstream activities. In a case like Tessa, the level of intensity of services available gave her the opportunity to connect with support groups in an

## Tessa's Story

Tessa and baby Oscar were referred to Home Visiting when Oscar was 6/12 and was reportedly an unsettled baby. On paper at least, this referral had the potential to be straight forward and routine. Initial assessment revealed a different and quite complex story – Tessa was suffering from depression – later diagnosed as post-natal depression. The house was disorganised, dark and gloomy and she was immobilised on the lounge with a screaming baby on a mat on the floor. She reported her husband was no help because he was on work-cover suffering from depression as the result of a major road accident some years ago. He couldn't handle the baby crying and had withdrawn from the family emotionally and physically.

Referral to a local GP resulted in referrals to a paediatrician for Oscar and a psychologist for mum along with a mental health plan which gave her access to child care and a post-natal depression support group (Being with Baby). We also placed a family support worker to visit on a regular basis. The paediatrician diagnosed reflux and medicated baby Oscar. Anti-depressants combined with Being with Baby supported her as did the family support worker who for a short time visited on a daily basis, later reducing to weekly visits.

The skills learned from Being with Baby contributed to Tessa changing her pattern of thinking. She persevered with child care, at times finding the conflict between wanting to be a good mum and her need for time out, almost too much. The skills learned from this group also influenced her marital relationship. To support the positive changes occurring in this family she was offered the opportunity to attend Stepping Stones play group which follows Being with Baby. This is a very small supported play group which encourages families at an individual level and makes connections with the broader community, i.e. library, speech pathologist.

Tessa was also encouraged to join several of the groups operating at FamilyZone. She chose to join New Age Mums group which meets on a Friday afternoon, following Friday morning play group. Within this group she found the support to enjoy her parenting but also voice concerns and ask questions of the other women. This group enjoys crèche on occasions but it is more common for the women to interact with their children within the group setting. She also found the craft group supportive, being able to have her baby close by as well as enjoy the company of the other women.

Twelve months down the track Tessa has secured child care with which she is happy – she has returned to work three days a week. Baby Oscar is a lively likeable toddler who socialises well within the group setting but has obvious strong attachment to his mum. He also has a strong attachment to his dad who is now also responsible for child care one day a week. They report their relationship is much more positive – they really appreciate the support offered and the journey FamilyZone travelled with them.

environment of ongoing relationships of trust with staff and other families. She had the opportunity to make friends and access support, without which the outcomes for this family may have been very different.

### **Family Activity Centres and Children's Centres**

Family Activity Centres differ from children's centres which include childcare and early learning activities. Family Activity Centres are most effective when they have the capacity to respond to families in crisis in a timely manner. These include those experiencing domestic violence or mental health issues. If these families at high risk of vulnerability can be engaged during such times and receive appropriate support, it has been found that they will be more likely to continue to access the range of wrap around services they require. Many of these families are less likely to engage under normal circumstances as they tend to be cautious of such support due to previous unsatisfactory experiences or inaccurate information about services. Interventions in these circumstances require a level of staffing and flexibility that is difficult to provide in Children's Centres. By their nature Children's Centres engaged with children and families usually need to have a more structured and less disruptive environment in which to function effectively.

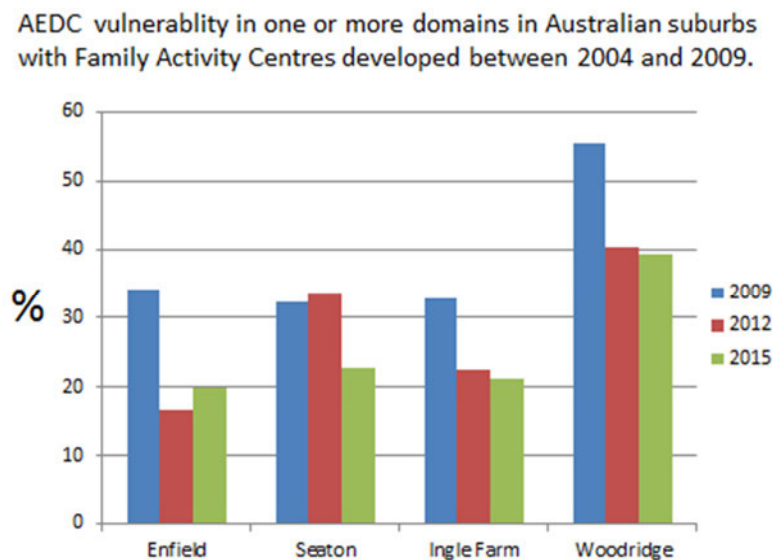
### **Does it work?**

As part of the national evaluation of the Communities for Children initiative two rounds of baseline data tracking changes in services was collected (Muir et al, 2009). It showed that 15 of 23 new services added to the site during this 3 year period were located at FamilyZone Ingle Farm. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data released in 2006 showed that Ingle Farm in the northern suburbs of Adelaide had the highest proportion of children vulnerable in one or more domains of all the suburbs in the Salisbury C4C site (32.5%) which at that time did not include Brahma Lodge (added in 2009). AEDC results measured in 2009 revealed no significant change (32.9%), however in 2012 a reduction, by approximately one third, of children vulnerable in one or more domains (22.5%) was measured for Ingle Farm. This was sustained and marginally improved as measured by the 2015 data.

We anticipate that by 2012 most of the 0-5 year olds and their families engaged in the site would have been part of the cohort assessed on entering reception. The 2009 cohort would have measured children who had experienced some early intervention activities as pre-schoolers but not any engaged in C4C activities during the perinatal period as they were not yet in operation. This data lends support to the importance of intervention in the first three years and the notion that community capacity building initiatives such as C4C can be expected to take some time before their impact becomes measurable. Substantiated notifications data from Ingle Farm also appears to be trending in the right direction, significantly reducing in the period 2012-2015 in comparison to the previous three years.

The SA Department of Education and Child Development has been instrumental in providing significant space in partnership with Salisbury C4C to develop this centre at Ingle Farm Primary School. With the establishment of a Children's Centre the Ingle Farm Campus now offers one of the most comprehensive early childhood support

services of its kind. The Salisbury site drew on the experience of a prior state and federally funded initiative known as CaFE Enfield. It is significant that the suburb of Enfield saw a 14% reduction in child vulnerability in one or more area between 2009 and 2015 on the AEDC. The North Western Adelaide C4C site also developed a family activity centre at Seaton and this suburb saw a 9.7% reduction in vulnerability in one or more areas between 2009 and 2015. Only a few C4C sites developed family centres including one at Woodridge in Queensland which was modelled on FamilyZone Ingle Farm and this suburb saw a 16.2% reduction in vulnerability in one or more areas between 2009 and 2015 (Sims & Brettig, 2018).



Overall the CfC initiative has been positive for families including seeing fewer families living in jobless households. An extensive national evaluation of the Communities for Children initiative (Edwards et al, 2009) found that “The overall conclusion is that on balance that CfC had positive impacts. The positive impacts were that:

- fewer children were living in a jobless household
- parents reported less hostile or harsh parenting practices
- parents felt more effective in their roles as parents

### **The Nordic Model of Family Centres**

A recent OECD Report partially funded by the Australian Government recommended single entry points to access services (one stop shops). It highlighted universal family centres as the preferred model for delivering integrated social services for vulnerable groups.

In the Nordic model family centres offer integrated services usually including antenatal healthcare, social welfare preventative activities and operations and what the Swedish call open preschool (Bing, 2013). Open preschool offers a space where parents can visit together with their children while they have parental leave or have leisure time on weekdays. It offers parents the opportunity of using both expert knowledge and peer support to improve their lives and those of their children. A drop-in service is available when the parents need it without an appointment in advance (Abrahamsson, 2013). The objective of these centres is to offer a neighbourhood meeting place to strengthen the social network of parents and



children providing learning and skills development opportunities, information and encouragement.

Children need to grow up in a supportive community. Many communities are trying to deal with significant and challenging family problems and need to be engaged with professionals who are skilled to identify and address issues. How do we develop child and family supportive communities at a scale and character that addresses barriers at every level and so potentially make a significant contribution to ending the kind of family violence which adversely effects child development? To do this we need to adopt a whole of community government and family approach to supporting families at risk of vulnerability.

**The expanding universal family centre model**

The most common form of universal family social service is perhaps the Family Centre model. In most cases these family centres bring together a fully co-located range of services central to promoting the wellbeing of both the children and the parents. In Sweden, the pioneer of this form of family support, municipal family centres offering a variety of services to families have been in place since the 1970s (Kekkonen et al, 2012). These centres, which are free of charge are open to all families and offer cross-sectional services, including educational support for children under six as well as health and social services for families. Families have access to services provided by multi-disciplinary teams consisting of paediatricians, nurses, psychologists, social workers and other professionals from pregnancy until a child's entry into primary school.

In addition to the Nordic countries where these centres play a central role in providing services for families, similar 'one stop shops' for families following the Nordic family centre model have also been introduced for instance in Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia in the past years, although these centres are not yet turned into a national service available nationwide (European Commission 2012).

OECD (2015), *Integrating Social Services for Vulnerable Groups: Bridging Sectors for Better Service Delivery*, OECD Publishing, Paris. p60.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264233775-en>

*By bringing together people working on all levels of society – from the local community to the national and global levels – coordinated, integrated and holistic approaches to ending domestic violence can be created. Government, social and family service organisations, educational and religious institutions, health care facilities, and business all have important roles to play in the efforts (Asay. et. al. 2014).*

The Family Activity Centre model of integrated service delivery offers a highly promising way forward towards achieving the kind of tenfold return on investment, predicted by economists (Heckman, 2012), by providing the kind of services that support families, especially in the first one thousand days of life when they are most needed.

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## Appendix 6

### ***Moneycare – example of financial counselling and capability program***

Western Sydney - collaborative work to transform life.

John\* aged 56 was bailed to Adele House, a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation service in NSW. He has been isolated from family, friends and his community for several years due to his heavy drinking and at times anti-social behaviour.

His substance abuse cost him his marriage, family, and employment. He found himself homeless prior to going into Adele House. John had a motor vehicle accident debt due to not having insurance cover and he also had a number of SPER fines (unpaid infringement notices). He was receiving a Disability Support Pension (DSP) while participating in the residential drug and alcohol program at Adele House, but was unable to pay his debts.

John was referred to The Salvation Army's *Moneycare* program to assist him with his financial situation and debts. David, the financial counsellor, completed a thorough assessment and developed a plan with John. David advocated on behalf of John with the insurance company, who agreed to waive the motor vehicle debt and John worked out a payment plan to pay his SDRO debt by participating in a Work and Development Order. John is moving towards the later stages of his rehabilitation program and has refrained from drinking. He has gained employment, works three days per week, and is still seeing David. John is currently looking for private rental accommodation with the support of Adele House.

John has slowly transitioned back into the community and *Moneycare* have been working closely in partnership with Adele House. There has been such a transformation and journey for John from when we first met him; he felt he was in a helpless and hopeless situation. John only engaged with Adele House initially because the courts had bailed him there, and it was the only way he was going to stay out of jail. Twelve months on, he is a new man. John has connected with his son and feels he now has hope for his future. This case is an excellent example of working in partnership with other agencies and working collaboratively to support long-term positive outcomes for people.

*\*Name changed to protect identity and privacy of person.*