

## FACILITATING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN OUR COMMUNITIES

The Australian Government believes that all Australians need to be able to play a full role in all aspects of Australian life. To be socially included, all Australians must be given the opportunity to:

- secure a job;
- access services;
- connect with family, friends, work, personal interests and local community;
- deal with personal crisis; and
- have their voices heard.

Although Australia is a wealthy nation, there are concentrations of poverty, illness, homelessness, poor educational outcomes and unemployment which are barriers to people participating fully in our economy and society. The Australian Government has identified the following priorities for social inclusion:

- addressing the needs of jobless families with children;
- effective support to children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage;
- focusing on specific locations, neighbourhoods and communities to ensure programs and services are getting to the right places;
- addressing homelessness;
- employment for people living with a disability or mental illness; and
- closing the gap for Indigenous Australians.

Local government has increasingly taken on responsibility for, and designed programs, to promote social inclusion. Local governments' long history in the provision of community services and the understanding of the needs of identified groups is vital for delivery of the national social inclusion agenda.

To progress the Social Inclusion Agenda, the Australian Government has established the Australian Social Inclusion Board. The Board, which comprises members of the Australian community from a variety of backgrounds, will consult widely with the community, including local government, on various aspects of social inclusion.

***What are some of the innovative ways that local governments can look after members of our communities who are jobless, disabled, homeless and elderly?***

***What are some of the things that local government can do to ensure local services are delivered to those with the greatest need, including those in isolated and remote areas?***

***How can a local government's knowledge of their community contribute to the Australian Government social inclusion agenda?***

***How can local government best work in partnership with the Australian Government to foster social inclusion?***



## FACILITATING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN OUR COMMUNITIES

### Government work underway

Ms Julia Gillard, Minister for Social Inclusion, recently released a report from the Australian Institute of Family Studies – Social Inclusion: Origins, Concepts and Key Themes, which provides a background to the concepts of social inclusion and explores social inclusion in the Australian context.

A copy of the report and further information on the Australian Government's social inclusion approach is available at [www.socialinclusion.gov.au](http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au)

The Australian Government has also established specific processes to progress some of the priorities within the social inclusion agenda, including the following:

*The Australian Government White Paper on Homelessness - A Green Paper on homelessness 'Which Way Home?'* was released in May 2008 to promote discussion and develop new and lasting ways to tackle homelessness. Submissions have now closed, with the White Paper scheduled for release in late 2008.

*National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy* - The Strategy aims to address the barriers faced by people with disability and/or mental illness that make it harder for them to gain and keep work. The Strategy is being developed in close consultation with consumers, peak bodies, employers, state and territory governments and experts. It is due to be released by the end of the year.

*Closing the Gap in life expectancy for Indigenous Australians* - The Australian Government has set ambitious targets for closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational attainment and employment outcomes.

### The Australian Social Inclusion Board

The Board was established in May 2008 to act as the main advisory body to the Australian Government on ways to achieve better outcomes for the most disadvantaged in our community. The Board will consult widely and provide views and advice on various aspects of social inclusion. The Board comprises members of the Australian community who come from a variety of backgrounds but have a common goal of making a significant contribution to Australian society by advancing the social inclusion agenda.

The Government has asked the Board to focus initially on providing advice on how it can better assist jobless families with children, children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage; and implementing locational approaches to disadvantage.



**An Australian Government Initiative**

phone 1800 065 113

email [localgovernment@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:localgovernment@infrastructure.gov.au)

internet [www.aclg.gov.au](http://www.aclg.gov.au)