

2 Review of Literature

The following literature review has focused on:

- Overarching definitions relevant to the scope of this report
- Evidence of spatial disadvantage in Queensland
- Policy and program responses from Australia and elsewhere.

Policy and program responses to place-based disadvantage highlight examples of comprehensive initiatives often driven nationally where integrated plans are implemented involving multiple agencies (government and non-government) in strong partnerships with an overriding focus on outcomes and evidence of success.

This review also looks at examples of prevention and early intervention approaches to poverty reduction as well as examples of placed-based programs (examples of both comprehensive policies and programs as well as more incremental and bottom-up examples).

There is also reference to a potential role for alternative economics and social enterprise as a way of driving change at the community level in ways that positively impact upon local economies through various funding sources both traditional and innovative.

This review focuses on selecting a reasonable overview of innovative practice relevant to the questions driving the Scan of Disadvantage. As the scope of the project was constrained in terms of time, it was not possible to include every relevant example. The process of tracking ideas and examples of innovation is acknowledged as important and the recommendations include encouragement to develop a clearing house function that creates a mechanism for continuing to share good practice from Queensland and beyond.

2.1 Key Concepts: An Overview

Definitions of Poverty

Definitions of poverty are the subject of ongoing debate in Australia and elsewhere. In 2006, a report on poverty for the Queensland Council of Social Service highlighted 'that consensus on a single definition of poverty is lacking' (UQSRC, 2006:1).

Tanton et al. (2008:4) highlight that 'in Australia, a relative poverty line based on 50 per cent of median equivalised disposable household income is the most commonly used poverty line'. However they also point out that 'income clearly captures only one aspect of disadvantage, and does not address the underlying causes of poverty, or wider aspects of deprivation and social exclusion' (Saunders cited in Tanton et al. 2008:3).

Definitions of poverty also indicate that certain groups tend to be more vulnerable to poverty including female-led single parent households, lone women, older people, people living alone, immigrants, refugees and Indigenous people (Graham et al., 2009).

Saunders et al. (2007:2) emphasise 'three overlapping concepts - poverty (defined in terms of low income), deprivation and social exclusion' based on the view that:

'social disadvantage takes many different forms, and the identification and measurement of poverty and other forms of disadvantage must be grounded in the actual living standards and experiences of people in poverty. This involves identifying the different forms of deprivation and exclusion and developing indicators based on the factors that restrict people's ability to acquire the items and participate in the activities that are widely regarded as essential for full membership of society'.

Saunders et al., 2007:2

Social Exclusion

I just want to live like other people. I don't like feeling different all of the time. Why can't I feel secure? I hope one day I will be able to wear what other people wear and be able to stop in at a coffee shop and have a nice home and go to the dentist and get my hair done. Then I can get a good job in a nice place and people will smile at me and I will be noticed. Then I will be part of the community and get some of the good life ...

Social exclusion emerged as a policy focus in countries such as France and also in Britain (Saunders et al., 2007:11). Now the Australian Government has also focused on the issue of social exclusion with the establishment of the Australian Social Inclusion Board (Australian Government, 2009). The focus of the board is to advise the government on 'ways to achieve better outcomes for the most disadvantaged in our community' (Australian Government, 2009).

The concept of social exclusion is used to emphasise complex and inter-related dimensions beyond simply income poverty. Definitions of social exclusion tend to focus on how individuals and groups might be left out of relationships and opportunities because of a lack of resources, income, rights and services (Levitas cited in Saunders et al., 2007:12).

Many different experiences and circumstances are understood to drive social exclusion including the characteristics of local neighbourhoods, exclusion from services, poor health, lack of housing, limited networks and poor access to labour force opportunities (Pierson quoted by Social Inclusion Board Indicators Working Group, 2009:viii-ix; Atkinson cited in Wilson et al., 2006:2). Some definitions of social exclusion highlight the role of attachment to place as one dimension (Kearns and Forrest cited in The Benevolent Society, 2008:6).

In general, a wider focus on social exclusion helps to identify and respond to 'multiple, interacting barriers to inclusion' at the level of analysis and action (Smyth, 2008:5). There is considerable evidence that social exclusion is made worse by the location where people live (Wilson et al., 2006:3).

There are a number of ways in which the characteristics of places contribute to social exclusion. 'Geographic isolation, lack of access to transport, sub-standard housing, vulnerability to crime, poor education, inability to communicate in English, inadequate family support, limited social networks, the absence of good role models, lack of access to affordable telephone communications, poor health and physical and intellectual disabilities' are all conditions that help to drive trends towards socio-spatial exclusion (Wilson et al., 2006:3). As Gleeson and Carmichael point out, 'the social exclusion debate has embraced space and place as a central issue (2001:10). The recognition of multiple factors driving disadvantage (which in combination render some groups and places more excluded than others), will help to shape effective responses.

Social Cohesion

Another important concept is that of social cohesion. Cohesive and connected communities are acknowledged as important within the Australian Government's current policies on social inclusion (The Benevolent Society, 2008:5). Vinson found that areas with low social cohesion were more likely to have characteristics such as higher crime rates, early school leaving, unemployment, child maltreatment and admissions to psychiatric hospitals (2007:94). Lack of social cohesion can lead to anti-social behaviour which drives the provision of costly crisis interventions.

Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) have examined the implications for societies measuring a high degree of income inequality. In more unequal societies, the rates of mental illness are higher and drug and alcohol abuse, obesity and teenage pregnancy are more common. The implications are felt across society with greater overall stress levels, and significantly more mistrust between high income populations and those on lower incomes. This often manifests in more punitive approaches to crime. Wilkinson and Pickett suggest that measures to reduce income inequality will improve health and wellbeing for everyone.

Poverty and Place

There is a significant history of analysing the spatial dimensions of poverty in Australia extending from international recognition that poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion may all respond to spatially sensitive policies and programs. In the broader international context, there is recognition that:

'Place is important because it provides infrastructure, facilities, goods and services ... and shapes its members' experiences and well being. Communities are an important source of cultural, social and civic identity. Their small-scale allows residents to participate in decision-making'.

Canadian CED Network, 2007:3

Embedded in debates about poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion is the question of whether effective solutions should focus on service delivery to people or on place level strategies including community development (Griggs et al., 2008). While some evaluations of person and place-targeted policies indicate that most initiatives had some favourable impacts, these policy initiatives had largely 'been developed separately and sometimes in isolation from each other' (Griggs et al., 2008:2). It is important to consider what might be achieved if a deliberate effort was made to capture synergy between people and place policies on the basis that 'these place activities have to be integrated with those mainstream social services, access to which is understood to be central to social inclusion' (Smyth, 2008:11).

McPherson and Randolph (2001:7) distinguish between:

'... mainstream social welfare and economic policies on the one hand, and place focused initiatives on the other. Whereas the former affect life chances and social outcomes in areas of high disadvantage through the broader operation of redistributive assistance and other macro policy activity, they are not seen to be specific to these areas. Nevertheless, they arguably play a crucial role in both creating disadvantaged areas and need to be thought of as part of the policy package that addresses the problems of such areas. Indeed, it has been argued that making universal policies more spatially aware is the long term answer to problems disadvantaged areas and their populations currently face.'

McPherson and Randolph, 2001:7

This report does not attempt to draw conclusions about the relative merits of focusing solutions on people, issues or places. Considering these options as either/or propositions is also unhelpful given the complex and interrelated nature of poverty, disadvantage, deprivation and social exclusion. This report does have a focus on identifying spatial disadvantage and as such strives to articulate a framework for how universal policies and 'place' focused initiatives might be synthesised to drive home measurable improvements in the circumstances of people negatively impacted by their location.

2.2 Spatial Disadvantage in Queensland

QCOS estimated that 413,000 Queenslanders were living below the poverty line in 2005/2006, with poverty defined as living below 50% of median disposable income of all Australian households (2008:1). This represented 10.6% of all Queenslanders. Citing NATSEM, Kryger demonstrates that some specific areas in Queensland have higher rates of poverty than this overall figure with the Federal electorates of Maranoa, Hinkler and Wide Bay reporting significantly higher poverty rates than the State average (14.8%, 16.1% and 16.2% respectively) (2009:6-7). These electorates also recorded the highest poverty rates in 2001 with 13%, 13% and 13.8% respectively illustrating that for some places, high levels of poverty persist over time (Kryger cited in UQSRC, 2006:3).

Various methods have been used to demonstrate the extent of spatial disadvantage in Australia (Baum et al. 2005, Tanton et al., 2007; Vinson, 2007; Vu et al., 2008; Kryger, 2009). Vinson for example, in *Dropping off the Edge: the Distribution of Disadvantage in Australia*, analysed a number of indicators which were chosen on the basis of 'research evidence of their close association with social disadvantage' (2007:ix). The categories of indicators were social distress, health, community safety, economic and education (Vinson, 2007:6).

Vinson concluded that disadvantaged localities in Queensland were distributed across Metropolitan areas (8 localities), non-metropolitan urban areas (8 localities) and rural (24 localities) (2007:97). Vinson went further to recommend Mt Morgan and Woodridge as priority areas for intervention (2007:102).

The General Deprivation Index for Australian cities was developed by Baum (2008), using a number of variables including demographic characteristics, income, housing and labour force information. While Brisbane had no suburbs in Band 1 (highest relative deprivation), 25 suburbs were ranked in Band 2 (high relative deprivation). Baum describes suburbs in Band 1 or Band 2 as localities 'known as welfare or retirement migration locations often on the fringes of the city in the newly expanding peri-urban regions or in coastal communities' (2008:14).

AMP with NATSEM have produced a report into socio-economic inequality by examining small areas in relation to income, unemployment, immigration and housing costs (Vu et al., 2008). Using SLAs as a geographical unit and data from the national census in 2001 and 2006, evidence of inequality emerges despite an overall national growth in prosperity during the same time period (Vu et al., 2008:3). 'Good news at the national level can still mask very different outcomes for those living in the many diverse regions that characterise Australia' (Vu et al., 2008:3). These trends included:

- While capital cities showed substantial increases in income, these 'have been largely offset by rising housing costs and general price increases'
- Households in areas with the highest incomes have seen their incomes increase on average by 36% compared to 29% of the lowest incomes
- Households in 'middle income neighbourhoods experienced around a 65% increase in their housing costs from 2001 to 2006 compared with only a 54% increase for households in the most affluent neighbourhoods. across all income groups there was a decline in outright home ownership between 2001 and 2006.

Vu et al., 2008:3, 12-13

By mapping the level of affluence of each area, it was possible to demonstrate that areas with higher incomes are generally next to one another and correspondingly, areas with low incomes tend to be next to one another (Vu et al., 2008). Generally speaking 'there is usually a medium income 'buffer' between the richest areas and poorest areas' (Vu et al., 2008:7).

Tanton et al. (2007:1) calculated small area poverty estimates for 2006 using spatial micro-simulation techniques in three states and one territory within Australia, including Queensland. Physical maps highlighting areas of relative poverty demonstrate that 'areas outside Australia's capital cities are more likely to have higher proportions of people in poverty than areas within capital cities ... Clusters of non-capital city areas showing lower rates of income poverty include areas in north Queensland to the west and south of Mackay' (Tanton et al., 2007:8). They are careful to point out that while capital cities generally have fewer poor SLAs, 'there are clusters of income-poor suburbs within these cities' including Brisbane (Tanton et al., 2007:8).

This is consistent with debates about certain push factors for some groups such as younger families relocating from larger population centres and locating in non-metropolitan areas (Healy et al., 2009:9). Access to more affordable housing in addition to employment and lifestyle factors all played a role in attracting families from metropolitan to non-metropolitan areas (Healy et al., 2009:6). Healy et al. found that increased population generally resulted in increased socio-economic advantage with associated evidence of disadvantage being displaced to areas further inland from coastal areas (2009:22).

Available data for cities also demonstrates that pockets of disadvantage exist. In Brisbane for example, 2.3% of people aged between 0-64 years are living with a severe disability. Wacol's population included 9% of people with a severe disability (influenced by the presence of a large psychiatric hospital) while Redland had 5.8% (AIHW, 2009:9). AIHW, in mapping the location of people living with a disability, showed that people living in the most disadvantaged quintile of Brisbane were 2.4 times more likely to have a severe disability than the most advantaged quintile (2009:9) ((based on the 2006 SEIFA Index for relative advantage/disadvantage). This data illustrates that 'while disability is less common in metropolitan areas than regional and remote areas at a broad level, some local areas within cities still have relatively high rates of severe disability' (AIHW, 2009:20).

AIHW acknowledges that people with a disability may be attracted to areas of higher relative disadvantage because housing may be more affordable even though other costs such as transport might actually add to the cost of living longer term. AIHW also highlights that relative socio-economic disadvantage may cause increased risk to health and therefore exacerbate disabilities (greater risks from smoking and sedentary lifestyles, environmental hazards and psychological stress as a consequence of poverty and social exclusion) (2009:20-21).

These different frameworks for analysing spatial disadvantage in Queensland highlight the diversity of areas that are affected. Gleeson and Carmichael cite Spiller and Budge's analysis of the various types of disadvantaged regions in Australia as follows.

Table 6. Framework for Different Types of Locational Disadvantage

Area type	Elements
Inner City	Historically, there have been concentrations of poverty in the city core which have been pushed out by the revival of central areas. Pockets of disadvantage may remain in these areas.
Outer suburbs	While not all outer suburbs are disadvantaged 'there is evidence that many outer metropolitan locations suffer from serious deprivation in terms of access to a broad range of services and facilities'.
Rural communities	Lack diversity in the local economy with resulting susceptibility 'to the impacts of economic restructuring'. Some rural communities are attracting lower income households because of housing affordability and this influx can have an impact on services.
Rural and remote Indigenous communities	Many of these areas have very poor access to education, training, jobs, basic infrastructure, water supply and road access.
Declining industrial towns	'Traditional industrial towns and certain suburbs in larger metropolitan areas have suffered from dramatic job losses, casualisation of the workforce and consequently an increasing reliance on social security'.
Emerging coastal welfare regions	It seems that a growing number of poorer people are being attracted to these areas seeking better lifestyles and lower skilled employment which tends to be casual or seasonal. 'As the poorer, working age households move into these areas there appears to be an increasing level of social and economic division both within these communities and between them and other parts of Australia'.
Middle suburbs of major cities	Sydney's middle west region is an example of where clusters of disadvantage exist.

Source: Spiller and Budge in Gleeson and Carmichael, 2001:20-21

2.3 Policy and Program Responses

2.3.1 Comprehensive Strategies to Reduce Poverty and Social Exclusion

Various European countries have multi-faceted and integrated strategies aimed at ending poverty (Collin, 2007:1). In the UK for example, targets were set for reducing poverty combined with strategies that included reforms resulting in a more supportive legislative framework. 'All parts of government and the community sector are working together to achieve success' (Collin, 2007:2). Importantly, the government also monitors progress and produces annual reports which outline measures of success against various indicators (Collin, 2007:2). The strategy aims to address a range of issues that contribute to poverty including:

- Lack of education and training
- Low labour market participation
- Poor working conditions
- A need for affordable housing

- Lack of accessible public transport systems
- Poor health
- Involvement in crime
- Better access to high-quality child-care.

Collin, 2007:2-3

Certain groups are targeted because they experience particularly high levels of disadvantage including children, lone parents, people with disabilities, members of ethnic minorities and people with multiple needs (Collin, 2007:3).

The UK Government has measured progress in terms of reducing disadvantage however also acknowledges the persistence of poverty for some groups in particular. For this reason, in 2006, a Minister for Social Exclusion was appointed and a Social Exclusion Task Force was launched to further consolidate efforts at achieving a reduction in disadvantage (Collin, 2007:3). The focus is on five guiding principles which warrant consideration in Australia and more specifically Queensland:

- 'Better identification and early intervention
- Systematically identifying what works
- Promoting multi-agency collaboration including through stronger Local Area Agreements
- Attention to personalisation¹⁵, rights and responsibilities
- Supporting achievement and managing underperformance.'

Collin, 2007:6

The Social Exclusion Task Force has also focused on particular needs and issues. Families are the focus of a body of work called 'Think Family', where the emphasis is on joined up services, and a 'no wrong door approach' (SETF, 2008).

Sure Start Children's Centres are one initiative with some Centres under this program including a range of co-located services for adults so that their contact with parents on one issue can result in strong linkages with other areas such as housing and employment (SETF, 2008:8). Staff are trained in assessment processes to identify a wider range of issues and outreach workers are available to visit families and encourage contact with various support services (SETF, 2008:8).

Another initiative called the Family Intervention Projects works with families who have high and complex needs and who have been identified as causing problems within their community (SETF, 2008:9). The core components of this initiative include:

- Persistence and assertiveness with families
- A dedicated key worker
- Whole family assessment
- A contract with the family
- Intensive and structured support
- A coordinated and integrated response.

Ireland also has a national anti-poverty strategy characterised by 'specific poverty reduction targets and indicators to monitor progress' (Collin, 2007:7). Implementation was supported by institutional arrangements within government to ensure that all relevant departments worked together to meet the targets. An independent body was engaged to oversee the evaluation process. The evaluation process demonstrated that the original targets had been achieved ahead of schedule leading to a revision of targets to eliminate poverty by 2016 (Collin, 2007:8). Collin quotes the Department of Social and Family Affairs in stating that 'in less than a decade more than 250,000 people, including 100,000 children have been lifted out of poverty' (2007:10).

On the foundation of these successes, the government is now focused on strategies to tackle deeper social exclusion (Government of Ireland, 2007). Various strategies target different groups (such as children, people with disabilities

¹⁵ This principle relates to deliberate efforts to pilot and explore service delivery that includes lead professionals with budgets and a capacity to broker tailored programs of support delivered in the context of 'strong and persistent relationships with those at risk'. This principle also relates to the idea of a compact with families and individuals at risk where actions are agreed. There is a strong focus on outcomes (HM Government, 2006:9).

and older people) and will include the capacity for improved ‘coordination and delivery at the local and national level’ (Collin, 2007:10).

Another example of a higher level framework is the European Council’s adoption of a set of social indicators focused on financial poverty, employment, health and education (O’Connor, 2005:346). These were to be used by all European Union (EU) countries to report on social inclusion from 2003. The structure for implementation included:

- Policy guidelines
- Setting benchmarks
- Concrete targets
- A monitoring system to evaluate progress.

The European social policy agenda includes a focus on the development of National Action Plans and emphasizes the accurate measurement of poverty and social exclusion ‘on a multi-dimensional basis’ as a critical first step to defining and implementing effective policy responses (O’Connor, 2009:351). The significance of defining indicators of social exclusion and measuring them is that it becomes possible to ‘identify progress in key areas and locate performance on key social-outcome indicators relative to other States’ (O’Connor, 2009:358). This agenda has influenced the development of National Action Plans in places like Ireland and illustrates the benefit of a vision and expectation from a high level, that social exclusion will be addressed as part of the evolution of Europe.

This emphasis on measuring the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion is an example of why baseline data outlining the extent and nature of disadvantage is important as a starting point and critical to the capacity for effective evaluation. This recognition of the importance of measuring social exclusion should allow future research to move beyond articulating the extent of spatial disadvantage towards the measuring progress over time as part of an integrated strategy to reduce disadvantage.

Australia

One example of a comprehensive framework emerging from Australia is *A Fairer Victoria* which is the State of Victoria’s social policy framework, in place since 2005. The priorities are:

- ‘Getting the best start
- Improving education and helping people into work
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Developing liveable communities.’

State Government of Victoria, 2009:3

The total investment since 2005 is just over \$5billion and the components of the framework are seen to be mutually reinforcing. Some of the key initiatives include:

- Investment in 70 new integrated children’s centres across the state
- 24 Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams to help vulnerable families
- Improved child and family support in 30 disadvantaged areas through the Best Start Initiative
- Free kindergarten programs for Indigenous 3-4 year olds and provided in-home support for Indigenous first-time mothers
- Reformed family violence services
- Planning for a new program of family mentors to visit struggling parents at home and to provide intensive parenting assistance
- 57 Family Support Innovation Projects providing more intensive support to families known to child-protection services resulting in a lower number of re-notifications
- 70 regional network leaders to provide support and interventions to schools in their network
- Establishment of 100 community enterprises
- Expansion of the Early Intervention in Chronic Disease in Community Health initiative to 36 Local Government areas to help ensure that disadvantaged people with chronic diseases can access services

- Expansion of community based services to older people and a Seniors Register where people can elect to be contacted by volunteers to check their safety and reduce isolation
- Funding for Men's Sheds
- The first Charter for Human Rights and Responsibilities at a State level in Australia which took full effect in January 2008.

State Government of Victoria, 2009

A Fairer Victoria has resulted in a number of measurable outcomes including:

- Better universal access to kindergarten regardless of income
- Significant progress towards achieving 90% year 12 completion rate
- The incidence of confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect is falling against national trends
- Improvements in the rate of people sleeping rough.

Department of Planning and Community Development, 2009:1

The Victorian Government has also developed Indicators of Community Strength focusing on three types of networks:

- 'Close personal networks
- Broader associational and community networks
- Governance networks.'

Pope, 2006:3

This framework includes detailed indicators as a basis for actually measuring community strength. These indicators also point to possible strategies for addressing lower levels of social cohesion in particular places. The framework uses data to highlight that not all population groups are equal in terms of their access to and participation in various types of networks and that 'economically disadvantaged groups in particular, appear to participate less in all three types of networks and are therefore less likely to have access to the benefits networks provide' (Pope, 2006:18). 'Participation has been shown to alleviate some of the negative outcomes of economic disadvantage' with evidence that levels of volunteering and being a member of a group correlates with decreasing imprisonment rates, improvements in birth weights and higher levels of psychological well-being (Pope, 2006:18). Some of the important elements involved in improving participation are identified by Pope (2006:19) as:

- Working to develop a community vision in relation to participation and governance
- Diverse approaches to community engagement
- Community plans
- Partnerships for change.

Discussion: The Implications of Comprehensive Strategies for Queensland

At a state level, Queensland has adopted a number of targets as part of Q2 which establishes five overarching goals to address a range of challenges including a Fair Queensland (Department of the Premier, 2009). There is also work underway in Queensland on indicators of community strength. At a State level there has also been some consideration of prevention and early intervention approaches to family support and child protection (Department of Child Safety, 2009). Coordinated and integrated policies such as a Fairer Victoria highlight the need for further consideration of how the total investment of the Queensland Government might be structured and implemented to reflect some of the key features of these higher-level, integrated strategies that have delivered significant outcomes.

A number of features of international examples are also important in considering the design and implementation of high level, coordinated policies in Australia and Queensland. On the one hand, they have been characterised as ambitious in that a high level policy framework driven in part through political leadership has engaged and synergised various departments and other stakeholders (such as the not-for-profit sector). However the evaluation of these ambitious targets did measure progress and demonstrated evidence of a reduction in poverty.

This opens the question of how a national and state level policy framework might be designed to reflect clearer targets for reducing poverty and disadvantage including spatial disadvantage. The Social Inclusion Agenda at the

national level in Australia and Queensland's Q2 framework, represent starting points. It will be essential however for all related policy areas to be drawn together under a broader vision for reducing disadvantage and in a way that overcomes institutional and cultural barriers to focusing on what really works and on implementation processes that have proven successful. The Australian Government's proposed blue print to reduce homelessness is perhaps one example of where significant planned investment is attached to clearly articulated targets including changes in how the homelessness service system currently works. As one example, this framework declares that homelessness is everyone's responsibility thus inviting a broader and more integrated response from diverse sectors.

These examples emphasise the importance of improved institutional arrangements including 'multi-year action plans with dedicated human and financial resources' and structures with a clear mandate and accountability requirements (Collin, 2007:11).

2.3.2 Prevention and Early Intervention

I used to yell at the kids and swear at them. I know it sounds bad, but looking the way they do, they got to get used to it. People will swear at them and talk down to them their whole life.

Mother of three boys

The emphasis on prevention and early intervention programs is often based on evidence from the field of neuroscience that 'the environment in which children are brought up during the first three years of life can impact on the brain's capacity to learn' (HM Treasury and Department of Education and Skills, 2007:11). Mercy and Saul (2009:2262) highlight the relationship between 'early adversity and health' stating that:

'Parental mental health and substance abuse problems, significant social deprivation or neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and exposure to violence between parents or other adults are examples of breakdowns in the protected and nurturing environments children need to become healthy adolescents and adults. Early exposure to such adversities has been linked to many emotional, behavioural and physical health problems ... A history of adverse exposures has been associated with health risks such as smoking and health problems such as obesity, diabetes, ischemic heart disease and sexually transmitted diseases'.

They also highlight long term impacts including irreversible changes to the brain resulting in long term poor health and poorer skill development influencing income and socio-economic status (Mercy and Saul, 2009:2262).

A number of prevention and early intervention programs have been evaluated including the Nurse-Family Partnership as an example of an early intervention program providing:

- Home visitation to low income, first time mothers from pregnancy and through the child's infancy
- Engagement with mothers and the wider family in improving health related behaviours such as smoking, alcohol use and accessing health services
- Support to improve economic self-sufficiency.

Several rigorous trials have demonstrated:

- A reduction in abuse and injury
- Improvements in cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes in children
- A positive cost-benefit ratio
- At 15 years follow-up, there were reduced crime rates and anti-social behaviour.

Mercy and Saul, 2009:2263

The following US prevention and early intervention programs were cited in a document focused on child and family support generated by the UK Government, and also highlight benefits and outcomes:

Table 7. US Prevention and Early Intervention Programs

Program	Description
Parents as Teachers Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operates in 50 States across America. ▪ Provides home visiting support to parents and children in the early years. ▪ Children who participated have higher test scores. ▪ Also evaluated that the overall benefits were higher than the cost of the actual program.
Perry Pre-School Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Took place in Michigan in the 1960s targeting children with low IQ and poor social and emotional skills. ▪ Proved that participants had measurably better outcomes as adults and that the benefits substantially outweighed the costs.
Iowa Strengthening Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seven week program for children and their families operating across the US. ▪ Works to enhance parenting skills, parent-child relationships and family communication. ▪ Children in the program are less likely to commit crime, start smoking, drink alcohol and take drugs.
Chicago Child Parent Centre Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aims to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged children through targeted teaching and health support in the early years. ▪ Participants at age 5 were more likely to be ready for school and at age 14 had higher test scores in reading and maths. By 20 years participants were more likely to have finished schools, had lower rates of being arrested and were less than half as likely to have been mistreated as children.

Adapted from HM Treasury and Department of Education and Skills, 2007:9

The Head Start program in the United States is a preschool program with the aim of reducing levels of disadvantage among some children compared to their peers (Garces et al., 2002:999). Head Start was launched in the early 1960s as a comprehensive program focused on child development. By 1988, a demonstration program was in place 'to provide integrated and continuous support services to low income families with infants' (Head Start History 2009:2). In an evaluation of the longer term effects of Head Start, economic and social success factors are examined by Garces et al. (2002:999). Although some long term benefits were found, this particular study was careful to point out that more research was needed to fully establish the long term implications of the program. Nonetheless, some of the reported outcomes included:

- Increased probability of completing high school and attending college
- Increased earnings by the early twenties
- Reduced criminal charges and convictions
- Some spill over effects between older and younger siblings.

Reynolds et al. reviewed 14 early childhood programs in relation to their impact on child maltreatment (2009). They concluded an overall 31% reduction in the rate of child maltreatment as a result of these interventions (2009:182). They summarise some critical components of successful interventions:

- Higher intensity interventions (both visiting programs and preschool)
- Comprehensiveness of programs (including various components such as family support, outreach and health services)
- Level of training of staff
- Long term follow-up.

Reynolds et al., 2009:196-198

In Queensland, the Pathways to Prevention Program took place in the Inala area on the outskirts of Brisbane. This project involved a partnership between Mission Australia and the Griffith University and was defined by a number of goals and principles. Interventions included:

- School based programs
- Child focused group programs
- Adult focused group programs
- Referral to specialist services
- Intensive family support.

Various favourable outcomes were measured including improvements in child behaviour, language and social skills (Homel, et al., 2006).

To expand early intervention approaches beyond pilot projects, Mercy and Saul advocate three interrelated systems:

- The synthesis and translation of information on effective interventions for practitioners
- Building the motivation and skills at the level of individuals, organisations and communities towards greater participation in prevention programs backed by evidence
- A capacity to deliver quality interventions at the national, state or local level.

The concept of earlier intervention has also been studied in relation to other groups such as older people. Shapiro and Taylor (2002:334) found that early intervention community based programs resulted in greater subjective well-being, lower levels of institutionalisation and a lower death rate compared to a control group not receiving these services. The intervention was designed to provide case management services earlier with a focus on enabling older people to remain independent for longer. Services included help at home, meals, personal care, transportation and respite. The study concluded that:

‘early provision of in-home social services is positively associated with elders’ subjective well-being and negatively associated with permanent nursing home placement and mortality ... (the participants) were less depressed, had a greater sense of satisfaction with their life overall and with their social relationships, had a greater degree of mastery, and were less likely to die or experience permanent nursing home placement’.

Shapiro and Taylor, 2002:339

The Benevolent Society in Australia cited a study commissioned by the Department of Family and Community Services in 2001 into the evidence-base that prevention and early intervention programs promote the development of stronger communities (TBS, 2008:22). The overarching analysis of these findings highlight that social cohesion can be built in disadvantaged communities through the following approaches:

- ‘building trust and reciprocity among community members
- Identifying community leaders and highly motivated community members
- Mobilising and utilising the input and skills of relevant professionals working in a community
- Facilitating skills development in areas such as organising groups, running meetings, lobbying, writing grant applications
- Identifying funding sources and increasing the capacity of groups to bid for these funds
- Building links between community groups and organisations to publicise achievements and share and access resources and information.’

The Benevolent Society, 2008:22-23

The Benevolent Society’s commitment to building social cohesion is based on its capacity to influence certain positive outcomes including family functions, engagement, employment, resilience, governance and voluntary structures (TBC, 2008:2).

The Society undertook some higher level analysis of the elements of successful interventions and programs and concluded the following were essential:

- ‘An early intervention/prevention approach

- A combination of individual focused and community focused programs
- The participation of community members
- The combined efforts of community and government programs and support
- Addressing whole of community issues and problems
- The utilisation of schools - they are critical
- The implementation of job training
- The encouragement of volunteering, especially among older community members.'

TBS, 2008:4

Discussion: The Implications of Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies for Queensland

This review of prevention and early intervention initiatives highlights diverse strategies including those that focus on the early years and supporting families, a focus on a particular group such as older people and also the potential for strategies that work at the level of communities as a way of strengthening social cohesion. A framework for reducing spatial disadvantage in Queensland would seek to address prevention and early intervention at all of these levels. The justification for considering a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention is based on a number of cited initiatives highlighting that initial investments in prevention and early intervention have better results and cost less than crisis driven remediation at a later stage. This rationale is supported by the notion that 'failure to address ingrained unemployment and social exclusion has ongoing and increased costs for society' and that prevention and early intervention represent a better approach to financial investment by Governments (Mangan, 2007:16).

This view was supported by evidence cited by Homel et al. (2006:94) showing that 'preventative interventions'... were 'considerably cheaper than remedial interventions for both behaviour management and literacy enhancement programs'.

2.3.3 Specific Examples of Place-Based Policies and Programs

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom government developed a *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (NSNR) to address issues of poverty and social exclusion (Canadian CED Network, 2007:15). This strategy included the following elements:

- A neighbourhood renewal fund
- Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) 'to facilitate multi-sector and multi-level efforts to improve service provision and economic opportunities in the poorest places'
- Community capacity building.

LSPs were seen as a critical component to reforming local service delivery in areas that were disadvantaged. NSNR was targeted to the 'poorest 20 percent of municipalities in England' and a focus on issues such as crime reduction, health improvements, more livable places, learning opportunities and the revival of local economies as a key to generating employment opportunities for local people (Canadian CED Network, 2007:15).

The UK Social Exclusion Task Force identified the value of 'an area-based approach focused on a small geographical area' and describes some elements of a neighbourhood approach to raising aspirations including:

- Mobilising the community - finding potential, positive campaigns, community empowerment and outreach techniques
- Changing attitudes and behaviours
- A coordinated and multi-agency approach - working at a neighbourhood level supports a greater capacity to join up services.

Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008a:25

Various other place-based initiatives from the United Kingdom have also been highlighted by The Benevolent Society as follows:

Table 8. UK Case Studies

Case study example	Location	Brief description
New Deal for Communities (NDC)	UK	<p>Aimed to close the gap between 39 disadvantaged communities and the rest of the nation. Interventions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improvements to the physical environment ▪ Promoting enterprise and employability ▪ Enhancing safety and security ▪ Promoting health ▪ Enhancing education. <p>Strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishment of boards with community representation to run local projects ▪ Service delivery ▪ Financial support for community groups ▪ Neighbourhood warden programs ▪ Business broker programs ▪ Skills and knowledge training. <p>NDC is considered to have had positive impacts on social cohesion, community outcomes such as reduced crime and increased educational attainment yet no change in employment rates for instance.</p>
Families and Schools Together (FAST)	UK	<p>A collaborative prevention and parent involvement program aiming to build social cohesion, networks and protective features towards addressing school failure, substance abuse, violence, child abuse and neglect.</p> <p>Teachers are involved in identifying children at risk whose families are then invited to join FAST. There is involvement by a facilitator, a substance abuse counsellor, parent partners, a teacher, a clinical social worker, a health/mental health partner and volunteers. The family is offered courses, therapy and other interventions.</p> <p>While evaluations have found positive outcomes, some studies have found the positive effects decrease over time.</p>
Neighbourhood Renewal	UK	<p>Implemented by the Joseph Rowntree (JRF) Foundation over 4 years in 20 communities across England, Wales and Scotland. Interventions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The development of action plans ▪ Access to funding for projects ▪ Facilitators ▪ Networking events ▪ Project funds ▪ Help with evaluating progress ▪ Institutional support from the JRF (project status and dissemination of opportunities).

Adapted from TBS, 2008:14-22

Canada

In Canada, communities across the nation are linked through Vibrant Communities Trail Builders, 'to test the most effective ways to reduce poverty at a grass roots level' (Canadian CED Network, 2007:18). There are four key sets of strategies including:

- 'Comprehensive local initiatives
- Grassroots collaboration
- Identifying community assets and putting them to good use
- A commitment to learning.'

Canadian CED Network, 2007:18

The Trail Builders are involved in implementing 'strategic, well-planned poverty-reduction initiatives' over a seven year period (Canadian CED Network, 2007:18). Some of the features of this approach include:

- A lead organisation
- A local community plan for poverty reduction
- Administration of a grant fund
- Tracking outcomes and documenting lessons learned.

Another Canadian initiative called *Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC)* emphasises an approach combining resources in new ways towards better effectiveness and better coordination of policies and programs to address issues such as health, housing, substance abuse and learning (Canadian CED Network, 2007:19).

United States

In the United States there has been a range of funding options for local initiatives which include some federal funding as well as private financing (Canadian CED Network, 2007:16-17). This context has seen the voluntary sector play an important role in 'building, supporting and mobilising local capacity and community leadership' (Canadian CED Network, 2007:16-17).

A particular example of this is the Neighbourhood Strategies Project (NSP) spanning six years and funded by the New York Community Trust (Jenny, 2009). The focus is on the creation of economic opportunities for disadvantaged young people and adults in three particular neighbourhoods. Important to this initiative is 'the simultaneous implementation of three core strategies: increasing resident employment; stimulating local economic activity; and strengthening neighbourhood institutions and affiliations' (Jenny, 2009). There is heavy emphasis on treating these components in a fully integrated way while still focusing strongly on 'the fundamental place of work in individual, family and community development' (Jenny, 2009). Each neighbourhood has governance arrangements resulting in community based collaboration - one location has over 200 organisations, agencies and individuals involved in a collaborative structure - another has 60. Sometimes the collaborative structures include specific sub-committees. These structures also oversee the management of NSP programs. NSP includes an initial year of planning and then five years of implementation as well as robust evaluation (Jenny, 2009).

Other examples of place-based policies in the United States include the following:

Table 9. US Case Studies

Initiative	Elements
Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding and tax credits for business in a number of zones and communities with the aim of strengthening zone economies and improve economic opportunities for residents resulting in increased jobs, resident employment and business ownership. ▪ Although these were achieved, the gains were considered quite modest compared with overall community needs.
Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CCIs focused on the provision of a range of social services and the development of human capital (through schools, children’s services, job training etc). ▪ Some also included economic development and improved housing. ▪ Some involved existing or new Community Development Corporations (CDCs). ▪ Committed to democratic decision making at the neighbourhood level. ▪ Included a focus on community building.

Adapted from Vidal and Keating, 2004:129

Australia

Gleeson and Carmichael (2001:49) highlight that ‘Australia’s regional policy record has been extremely limited by international standards’ and that by contrast the European Union (EU) has ‘a substantial regional policy infrastructure’. These policies are heavily focused on ‘uneven development, especially social exclusion and poverty’.

Nonetheless, a variety of place-based policies and strategies have emerged. Zappala and Green evaluated place management as an approach for addressing disadvantage which focuses more on outcomes and quote Crofts’ definition of place management as a ‘unifying spatial framework ... to ensure the achievement of desired outcomes for a specific geographic place’ (2001:2-3).

Randolph (2003:17) reflects on ‘place focused initiatives’ in Australia which tended to be ‘poorly coordinated and rarely (generating) any real synergies that lead to long term outcomes for the neighbourhoods into which they are targeted’. Randolph attributes this to:

- High level control over decision making within bureaucracies
- Little actual control of resources at the local level
- A tendency towards funding that is ‘project based’.

Randolph, 2003:18

Zappala and Green (2001:8) refer to place management initiatives that involve different approaches on a continuum from ‘place coordination’ through to ‘place entrepreneurship’. Citing an example of Place Management from Moree (NSW), they highlight the following components:

- Developing an inclusive vision for the area with a timescale of 10 years
- A place manager with local knowledge who lives and works in the area funded by ten government agencies but employed through a regional development board
- A degree of independence for the place manager with a visible, accessible shop front office.

Martin Stewart-Weeks advocates a form of place management that strives for new forms of governance in the work of addressing poverty and social exclusion (in Zappala and Green, 2001:9). While this approach might also involve the employment of a place manager, there is also a focus on the ‘restructuring (of) organisations to reflect outcome responsibilities rather than functions or inputs’ (Zappala and Green, 2001:9).

'A Fairer Victoria includes a place-based focus to reduce long-standing disadvantage in particular locations' including some of the following initiatives:

- Neighbourhood and Community Renewal Programs
- Capacity for over 50 community groups to strengthen social ties between neighbours
- Over 100 community infrastructure and urban design projects.

State Government of Victoria, 2009

Other initiatives have lowered the rate of rough sleeping, increased social housing units, reduced crime rates and attracted over 20,000 volunteers to community organisations (State Government of Victoria, 2009). The government is planning further investment to develop 'six Central Activities Districts as key hubs for residential development, employment, civic, retail and leisure activities' (State Government of Victoria, 2009:46).

Klein suggests that in addition to 'progressive macro social and economic policies' there is a need to supplement universal policies with targeted and place-based responses such as Neighbourhood Renewal (2004:114).

Some of the key principles underpinning Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) include:

- The importance of joined up government as well as inter-sectoral partnerships
- A shift from paternalistic service provision to social investment and citizen participation resulting in devolved power to communities
- Strategic partnerships at the local level between residents, state government departments, Local Government, local businesses, community groups and service providers
- Project governance arrangements involving a steering committee and working groups that implement action plans
- The employment of a place manager to build partnerships, find local champions and generally doing 'whatever needs to be done.'

Klein, 2004:114-116

In Victoria, NR has focused on a number of objectives including:

- 'Increased community pride and participation
- Improved employment, learning and local economic activity
- Enhanced housing and environment
- Reduced crime and greater safety
- Better health and wellbeing
- Increased access to services and improved government responsiveness.'

TBS, 2008:19

There have been five key action areas as follows:

- 'Place based partnerships developing local solutions to local problems
- Joined up and intensive transitional labour market programs targeted to those most in need
- Community infrastructure to support flexible and local service delivery
- Neighbourhood based social enterprises
- Early intervention in school and education.'

TBS, 2008:19

Interim evaluations have demonstrated measurable outcomes such as increased employment, housing improvements, more community hubs, new social enterprises and a reduction in crime (TBS, 2008:20).

The Melbourne 2030 framework is another example of a place-based response with the designation of various Activity Centres focused around transport and access nodes (Victorian Government, 2008:4). This framework recognises the need to shift from a focus on funding to a focus on places through 'integrated and coordinated multi-agency responses to bring the focus to (those) places' (Victorian Government, 2008:5). The Victorian Department of Planning

and Community Development supports place management in Activity Centres by funding 'place manager positions'. In a synthesis of literature and interviews with key stakeholders and place managers in Victoria, the Victorian Government has articulated a range of characteristics of place management to help focus its work in Activity Centres¹⁶. There are various models of place management with different emphases:

- Place management involving significant restructuring of the public sector around serious social issues with resources targeted and redistributed to meet the needs of locations
- The use of facilitation and persuasion to achieve outcomes
- Outcome management through place based roles.

Walsh cited by the Department of Planning and Community Development, 2008:7-8

Various Victorian programs have embraced place management including:

- The redevelopment of Dandenong which is managed through a formal Board and executive team (the Dandenong Development Board)
- The employment of a place manager in Footscray
- Geelong has employed a place management model for coordinating development. This included a program to raise funds for the area through rates.

Department of Planning and Community Development, 2008:8-9

The Government of Victoria developed a matrix of skills, roles and responsibilities for place managers which highlights the diversity and flexibility of the role (Department of Planning and Community Development, 2008:17-18). A place management approach is indicated where it is possible to define the boundaries of a place and where there is a 'sense of crisis associated with chronic social, economic and environmental problems' (Department of Planning and Community Development, 2008:12). Other important pre-conditions might include a need for visible actions and outcomes within clearly defined timeframes and the presence of opportunities that could be facilitated by someone in the role of driver (Department of Planning and Community Development, 2008:12).

Based on these pre-conditions, the role of a place manager might include:

- Place coordination and entrepreneurship
- Defining outcomes for a particular place
- Brokerage and facilitation
- Budget allocation
- Holistic planning for a place
- Doing 'whatever needs to be done' regarding causes and solutions
- Finding and supporting champions
- Work across agencies, helping to form coalitions and negotiating for others to take action
- Flexibility, creativity and innovation.

Department of Planning and Community Development, 2008:12

Queensland

The Community Renewal Program (CRP) in Queensland aims to 'reduce the level of disadvantage and raise the confidence and image of identified disadvantaged communities' (Reddel, 2008:7).

The CRP includes the following components:

- 'A place-based focus
- Delivery of services across a range of government activities
- Participation by government officials, elected political representatives, local community members, community organisations and the private sector
- An emphasis on the collection and analysis of indicators of community well-being.'

¹⁶ The Melbourne 2030 Plan includes 26 Principal Activity Centres, 120 Major Activity Centres and 900 Neighbourhood Activity Centres (Victorian Government, 2008:6).

Reddel, 2008:7

In Goodna for example, a Service Integration Project was initiated as a participatory mechanism and ‘highlighted the strength of collaborative network arrangements, the need for defined community goals and outcomes to guide these networks and the accepted “messiness” of government and community relations’ (Reddel, 2008:8).

Vinson also cites the Queensland Pathways to Prevention Program, in Inala, which included specific support for building family capacity delivered through:

1. ‘Individual support programs
2. Advocacy
3. Group support or training programs (including playgroups, life skills)
4. Family relief including holiday and recreation activities
5. Material assistance
6. Childcare.’

Vinson, 2009a:7

A further initiative in the North Gold Coast region is funded through the Federal Government Communities for Children program and was facilitated by Lifeline Community Care Queensland, a service agency of UnitingCare Queensland. The program includes various child focused hubs and services and activities such as parent drop-in mornings, parenting education, health and fitness activities, playgroups, new mums groups, access to child health nurses and reading programs (Oxenford and Coomera Community Youth Centre, 2009; Ingamells, 2007).

Brisbane was also the site of three place management projects initiated in 1999 by Brisbane City Council (BCC) and the Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet (2000). The emphasis of place management in Brisbane was on ‘measurable and sustainable improvement in quality of life for most disadvantaged residents in three target communities’ (Bourke, 2001:98). Other outcomes included improved coordination and collaboration between and within governments, business and community in each location and to build on community strengths and to increase the capacity of the community to address local problems and issues (Bourke, 2001:98). Linkages among economic, social and environmental issues were actively facilitated as part of a focus on the development of innovative responses to entrenched issues. This initiative included governance arrangements involving all of the key stakeholders at various levels (strategic and operational) and joint funding arrangements emerged between BCC and the State government.

By its early stages, Brisbane’s Place Management Program had brokered the involvement of 11 state agencies, two commonwealth departments, various BCC programs and the participation of over 100 community agencies and businesses (Bourke, 2001:99).

Lawson highlighted several achievements from Brisbane’s Place Projects including ‘improved effectiveness of existing programs through integration and collaboration, the development of innovative local responses’ and improvements in significant issues such as crime, through local area improvements and the engagement of community groups (2009:3). Overall, the level of funding for and commitment to the Brisbane Place Projects by government was quite limited and most of the projects were also time limited. The participating agencies were able to join up various aspects of service delivery to a higher level through governance arrangements and also through practical partnerships.

A further example from the Queensland context is the Cape York Partnerships initiative:

‘Cape York Partnerships (CYP) is a community development organisation formed in 1999 through an agreement between the Queensland Government and regional Indigenous organisations. It supports Indigenous individuals, families, clans and communities to move beyond passive welfare, towards a social recovery and to participate actively in the economy.’ (CYP Website, 2009 <<http://www.capeyorkpartnerships.com>>)

CYP includes a range of family initiatives including:

- Family income management

- Dealing with substance abuse and improving family health
- Educational engagement.

CYP Website, 2009 <<http://www.capeyorkpartnerships.com>

CYP is also exploring and developing a series of projects focused on 'Pride of Place' which work with local people and partners to improve the physical environment in particular locations. CYP has achieved a number of partnerships involving businesses, government and community services.

Related to the Cape York Partnerships, the Family Responsibilities Commission was enacted in Queensland in 2008 (Family Responsibilities Commission, 2009). It is an initiative emerging from four Cape York Communities (Aurukun, Hope Vale, Mossman Gorge and Coen), the State and Federal Governments, as well as the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership. The Commission utilises a range of approaches aimed at improving the safety and wellbeing of children and families.

South Australia

South Australia's Social Inclusion Board has developed an initiative (The Social Inclusion Initiative) that includes the following important elements:

- Mechanisms have been created that 'stand outside of government bureaucracy, but are connected to and work with, bureaucracy to deliver important reforms' (Cappo, 2009:ii).
- A focus on evidence as a basis for policy and programs
- Service delivery is 'joined-up' - responses 'cut across and through government departments and form partnerships with community and business' (Cappo, 2009:11). The result is a strong focus on prevention and early-intervention
- The initiative has a mandate from the Premier to act
- The initiative has a level of independence from government
- There is also a Social Inclusion Unit within the Premier's Department
- The authority to monitor implementation.

Cappo, 2009:i-13

This initiative has also defined a five stage process including:

- 'Scoping the issue
- Actively listening
- Developing advice
- Constructing an action plan
- Monitoring and evaluating implementation.'

Cappo, 2009:13

Some agendas for action including homelessness (a 14 point action plan), mental health and school retention have been identified (2009:13).

Discussion: The Implications of Place-Based Responses for Queensland

The provision of universal services and resources is a critical component of policies and programs geared towards reducing poverty and disadvantage. There is substantial evidence however, that place-based strategies have a role to play in reducing locational disadvantage. Examples from a broader international context and from Australia illustrate a number of defining features of successful place-based programs including:

- Supportive policy frameworks enabling of place-level work
- Governance arrangements, engagement and civic participation bringing all stakeholders and sectors together
- Joined up commitments from across government and between government and community sector providers
- Joined up commitments are mirrored by an integrated approach to local issues such as housing, employment, the local economy, transport, family support, local planning and community cohesion

- Funding for place-based responses that is flexible, allowing for innovation
- A clear vision and purpose tied to targets and rigorous evaluation
- The geographical scope is manageable yet also has strategic linkages to employment and other opportunities
- There is a focus on assets and capacities - not only needs and issues
- Community leadership is nurtured and resourced
- Staffing capacities are geared towards place-based approaches
- There is a culture of ongoing and measurable improvements.

The evidence of success in place-based responses combined with evidence of persistent spatial disadvantage in Queensland highlights the importance of expanding the availability of place-based programs aimed at responding to disadvantage. There is a platform of existing initiatives in Queensland to work from in determining how existing policy and program responses could become more place sensitive and how dedicated programs and funding could expand the capacity to measurably reduce spatial disadvantage in some key locations.

Rural and Regional Focus

In reflecting on changes in rural and regional Australia, Mission Australia has articulated a framework for understanding and facilitating 'sustainable positive change' (Mission Australia, 2006:2).

This framework highlights the importance of various 'capitals' including:

- The natural or environment capital: renewal and non-renewable resources involved in production and consumption, and also natural environmental assets
- Social capital: the ways people live together including networks, shared norms, values and opportunities for cooperation
- Human capital: includes the levels of education, knowledge, skills and health of people in the community as a basis for innovation, interaction and progress of ideas
- Institutional capital: includes government, the built environment and non-government sector
- Economic capital: income, wealth, land, goods, communications and crops.

Adapted from Mission Australia, 2006:4

Mission Australia's focus on these capitals in relation to rural and regional Australia is based on an assessment of a number of issues and opportunities including:

- Population decline including the impacts of internal migration
- The retention of young people linked to adequate opportunities for education, training and employment
- Access to services and support for people experiencing domestic violence
- Access to essential services and links with mobile and information technology based delivery systems.
- The need for capacity building policies and programs and equitable access to services and opportunities in areas of highest levels of social exclusion and disadvantage
- An enhanced role for Local Government including economic and social development as well as direct engagement with citizens
- More effective planning and policy development across government including more thorough assessment and mitigation of the unintended outcomes of policy decisions.

Adapted from Mission Australia, 2006:7

In this context and in recognition of the various 'capitals' Mission Australia recommended a range of strategies including:

- Enhanced training opportunities for Indigenous young people to work in a range of industries including health and aged care
- An enhanced role for Local Government in analysing local needs, mobilising the community and in service provision
- Better integration of a whole of government approach in relation to rural areas
- Targeted support for farming families

- Mobile outreach and information technology
- Impact assessment on policies in relation to rural areas
- Build capacity through network development
- Targeted additional resources to meet health needs (mental health, maternity health, Indigenous health, drug and alcohol rehabilitation)
- Enhanced core funding for existing services for victims of domestic and family violence.

Adapted from Mission Australia, 2006:48-49

In response to the needs of families moving to non-metropolitan areas, Healy et al. suggest measures to promote social inclusion and to encourage practice, programs and policies that address the implication of this trend. In particular, they suggest:

- Multi-service hubs with the capacity for active and assertive outreach
- Holistic service provision responding to diverse needs
- The capacity for flexibility in service provision including through mobile services
- Flexible funding arrangements
- Workforce strategies to attract and retain professionals
- Improvements to planning and transport
- Affordable recreational options.

Healy et al., 2009:6-7

Discussion: The Implications of Rural and Regional Strategies

When considering possible responses to locational disadvantage, the notion of focusing on strengths or ‘capitals’ offers considerable scope for actively working with the existing resources of a place and facilitating other inputs, resources and outcomes from that starting point. This is an important paradigm in the context of measuring locational disadvantage because particular places can become stigmatised in the process of being targeted as a place of relative disadvantage. This has associated impacts on the reputation of a place and also for the subjective view of people who live there who may be at risk of internalising a view of their local area that reflects disadvantage, poverty and a lack of progress. There are links between a paradigm focused on assets or capitals and place-based responses that include strategies actively working to improve an area’s image and the pride and sense of identity of its residents. Any decision to focus on a particular place in an effort to reduce disadvantage will need to move beyond an assessment of disadvantage such as that undertaken in this report, to then fully assess the strengths, assets and resources from which sustainable change can be leveraged.

Alternative Funding and Community-Centred Economies

In the United States, where poverty has continued to grow, some stakeholders began to focus more on alternative sources of funding, including from the private sector (Stoesz and Saunders, 1999:389). This resulted in the development of a number of foundations and Community Development Corporations (CDCs) which have helped to fund a range of neighbourhood projects.

Some CDCs provide specialised support through community development banks or credit unions which have raised capital for initiatives such as housing, the creation of child-care places and job generation (Stoesz and Saunders, 1999:390). These type of approaches are a shift from ‘aid to disadvantaged areas, (a social model that has focused on the deficits of individuals and is funded by income distribution), toward an economic model that emphasises investment and is financed through the generation of wealth’ (Stoesz and Saunders, 1999:390). The point is made that ‘depressed areas are great sources of funds (social security cheques, welfare payments, earnings etc) but these have been flowing into megabanks that use them elsewhere’ (Stoesz and Saunders, 1999:390).

The authors are careful to point out that this approach might not represent a replacement for a basic level of support offered through benefits for example, but could offer some alternative strategies that deliver new opportunities to individuals as well as communities (Stoesz and Saunders, 1999:396).

The work of CDCs recognises that many assets are created, not only through private investment but also investment by the public sector and the community sector (Vidal and Keating, 2004:126). Regardless of the instigator, this focus on assets is referred to as a place-based approach: it concentrates on creating assets that benefit people in poor neighbourhoods, largely by building and tapping links to external resources' (Vidal and Keating, 2004:126). CDCs are essentially non-profit community organisations with a focus on 'fostering physical and economic assets in their communities' (Vidal and Keating, 2004:127).

Vidal and Keating draw some conclusions about the future of CDCs. They emphasise 'the power that a well-organised community - pulled together by a strong network of churches, social service agencies, block clubs and other community organisations - can exert to help a CDC gain traction on an otherwise impossible problem, or gain access to external development resources that would be otherwise unavailable' (2004:134).

In the context of the current global financial crisis, refocusing on local economies and how they are strengthened might offer directions for policies and programs aiming to address serious disadvantage. Michael Shuman has developed a comprehensive framework for locally focused economics which is illustrated in a case study example from St Lawrence County (Shuman, 2003:1). This community was characterised by a high level of disadvantage relative to New York State and the United States overall with chronic and high levels of unemployment and poverty, savings falling behind compared to other areas, population decline and the out-migration of students after graduation (Shuman, 2003:1). Shuman's framework challenges the notion that 'there is no alternative' (TINA) to the global economy and advocates:

- Local ownership of business resulting in local dollars being 're-spent many times in the same place' which is a basic pre-condition to community prosperity.
- Import substitution - involving the analysis of products and services that are imported into communities as a basis for identifying new business opportunities based on replacing those imports with local enterprises. Termed LOIS, this approach involves participation in economic planning to determine:
- Which indicators and benchmarks of progress should we identify and measure (standard and alternative)
- What is the full range of assets already in place including land, labour, technology, social, political etc?
- Where are the leakages - that is what goods and services that individuals and businesses procure from outside of the community that could actually become a local enterprise?

Shuman, 2003:5

Shuman has developed comprehensive resources and tools to guide and inform various stakeholders in the implementation of LOIS including specific advice for community builders and policy makers ranging from:

- Developing a shared vision involving multiple stakeholders, of the community's economic future
- A grassroots education strategy about how to best support local businesses
- Procurement of goods and services giving advantages to local businesses
- Support for local banks.

Shuman, 2006

Local economic development opportunities are a central theme in many strategies aimed at addressing spatial disadvantage. In addition to mainstream strategies to create or sustain employment in specific locations, there is an emerging field working to develop local economies in ways that enhance the capacity of local and regional communities to sustain businesses, generate assets and infrastructure and enable local spending on local goods and services. Further initiatives have also structured financial opportunities for funding place-based initiatives that go beyond traditional sources. These types of initiatives are worthy of further exploration particularly in the current context which sees community finance institutions in Queensland working to investigate these types of initiatives based on a growing body of international evidence. Dialogue between UnitingCare Queensland, Government and community finance institutions could initially explore the potential of these types of mechanisms and what would be involved in their implementation.

Conclusion

The review of national and comprehensive strategies to reduce poverty and disadvantage links to the important innovations at a federal government level in Australia to address social exclusion. Within this broader context at a national level, the examples cited provide at least some guidance as to the important features of policies that have achieved success including:

- Well defined policy guidelines and high level leadership
- The establishment of benchmarks and concrete targets
- Multi-faceted responses to a range of issues such as housing, employment and family support
- A monitoring system for evaluating progress
- A measurable reduction in poverty and disadvantage.

The State of Victoria has introduced a comprehensive policy called *Fairer Victoria* which offers an important Australian example interpreting how a range of policies and programs across government departments might be coordinated to achieve better outcomes for people.

The examples of more comprehensive policies are included as a basis for advocating to both the State and Federal governments the value of driving this level of planning, implementation and evaluation from a starting point of significant policy leadership.

This review also looks in considerable detail at examples of place-based initiatives, some of which include a capacity to capture and coordinate a range of resources and funding inputs that are universally available. While specific place-based programs are also important, there can be considerable synergy achieved by actively working to capture the full range of available supports and services with an overriding organising principle being a concerted effort in relation to a particular place. Place-based programs can be comprehensive and driven by larger scale policy frameworks, and there are also examples of place-based work driven from opportunities 'on the ground' that have taken incremental steps towards capturing and synergising a range of existing opportunities.

The material provided aims to encourage broader advocacy to each level of government to achieve a more explicit focus on a place-based approach to the implementation of policy and to also encourage initiatives that focus on making best use of existing resources, roles and opportunities.