

6 Conclusion

This report has identified areas of disadvantage in Queensland at the level of Statistical Divisions. The report further identifies areas of relative disadvantage at a smaller level including:

- Statistical Local Areas
- Local Government Areas
- Census Collection Districts.

Overall, at the level of SLAs and CDs, the most disadvantaged areas are generally Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities highlighting the persistent levels of disadvantage in these areas.

The report identifies also that disadvantaged households are distributed across areas ranked from Quintile 1 to Quintile 5 (from most to least disadvantaged) which highlights the importance of universal and targeted policies and programs as a basis for reducing disadvantage.

At the same time, this analysis of SEIFA illustrates that some areas include particularly high concentrations of disadvantaged households. The spatial concentration of disadvantaged households experiencing multiple indicators of social exclusion requires specific attention at a policy and program level with associated budgets, and targets and designed to reflect a strong evidence base.

The process of identifying areas of relative disadvantage does not take account of the strengths, assets and resources of a place. Certain assumptions might be made about the extent of infrastructure, transport, access and opportunity in a particular location because of issues such as remoteness. The next step for strategies aimed at reducing locational disadvantage would be a further analysis of the community, including a thorough assessment of stakeholders, resources and strengths. Further analysis of the reasons for high levels of disadvantage and its persistence would be required on a place by place basis, to fully inform the development of specific responses.

Nonetheless, certain lessons can be drawn from analysing initiatives that have already demonstrated some degree of success as a basis for a range of policy and program responses including:

- Comprehensive strategies to reduce poverty and social exclusion (at a National or State level) which address a number of integrated areas such as economics, employment, service delivery, planning and community participation
- Innovation in community development and service delivery including early intervention and prevention and models that are flexible, integrated, client-centred, and that build community and client participation
- Placed-based responses including integrated planning
- Community economic development
- Advocacy based on evidence of what works, including spatially responsive approaches to universal policies, programs and services.

A number of countries and Australian States have adopted comprehensive, multi-faceted and integrated strategies aimed at ending poverty and social exclusion. Key elements of these strategies include high level policy leadership, targets, inter-sectoral partnerships and rigorous evaluation including the measurement of progress.

Implementation at this level is generally supported by institutional arrangements within government to ensure that all relevant departments work together to meet established targets. Significant additional funding is usually provided. Centralised anti-poverty policies and programs create a new level of leadership, funding and capacity that are difficult to achieve by communities and neighbourhoods on their own, starting with bottom up processes.

Typically these comprehensive strategies might aim to address a range of issues that contribute to poverty depending on the nature of the community in question, including:

- Lack of access to education and training

- Low labour market participation
- Poor local economies
- Degraded local environments in need of regeneration
- Poor working conditions
- A need for affordable housing
- Lack of accessible public transport systems
- Poor health including mental health
- Involvement in crime
- Limited access to high-quality child-care, early education and family support
- Low social cohesion
- Low levels of social capital including volunteering.

Adapted from Collin, 2007:2-3

Debate and analysis of poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and disadvantage in Australia and overseas highlights a range of possible policy solutions. Some policy solutions are focused on individual target groups such as older people, women, Indigenous people and people with a disability. Some are focused more on major structural issues such as labour market participation. Yet others are defined in terms of responding to an integrated set of issues and problems for particular places.

The 2010 Scan of Disadvantage recognises that many different responses have been tested and evaluated yet doesn't necessarily draw conclusions about the relative merits of focusing solutions on people, issues or places. Because the main purpose is to identify spatial disadvantage, this report strives to articulate a framework for how universal policies, policies responding to people and issues as well as 'place' focused policies might be synthesised to drive home measurable improvements in the circumstances of people affected by spatial disadvantage in Queensland. As such, 'place-based poverty reduction is part of a wider social inclusion framework' (CED, 2007:4).

This report concludes that treating people and place policies as binary propositions is potentially unhelpful and that instead '*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). The potential of area based strategies may include making '*mainstream policies work more effectively, especially by encouraging agencies to collaborate through partnerships*' (Randolph, 2003:19). As such, it is important to focus on responses that:

- actively facilitate available universal and targeted policies and programs with a focus on a particular area
- focus on place, including dedicated programs and budgets geared to achieve a high level of integration and coordination of all stakeholders, resources and assets towards a determined effort to reduce spatial disadvantage.