

SACOSS NEWS

Justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians



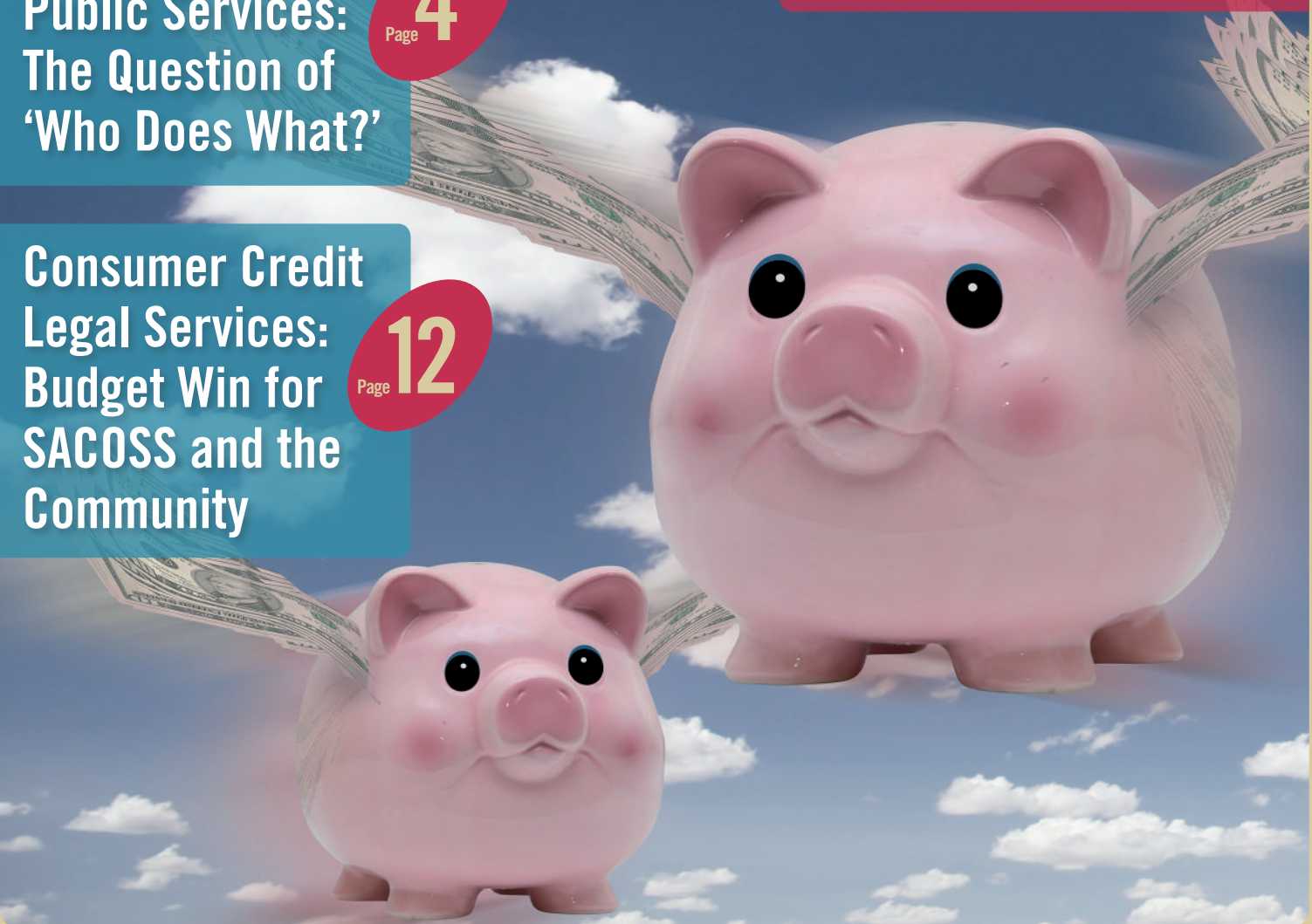
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Edition**



Winter 2013



SACOSS

South Australian Council
of Social Service

As the peak non-government representative body for the health and community services sector in South Australia, the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS) believes in justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians.

For information on membership, we invite you to visit our website or phone us.

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2013 Queen's Birthday Honours

SACOSS would like to acknowledge the South Australians in the community and social services sector who were honoured in the 2013 Queen's Birthday Honours List. Unfortunately there aren't enough pages in this whole SACOSS News to even begin to cover their tireless work and achievements (and we do apologise if someone has been unintentionally overlooked). Congratulations to all.

Mrs Angeliki Alexiou

For service to women's health, and to the community.

Mrs Alexiou helped to establish the Adelaide Women's Community Health Centre (Hindmarsh) and the Rape Crisis Centre, Adelaide in the 1970s. Mrs Alexiou died on 1 December 2012.

Dr David Caudrey

For outstanding public service to the disability sector.

Dr Caudrey has provided exemplary service to the disability sector for over 30 years. He has taken a lead role in developing and implementing state disability service frameworks that have seen significant reform to the way services are provided to the disability sector in South Australia.

Ms Rosa Colanero

For service to the community as an advocate for women and multiculturalism.

Ms Colanero has been the Chief Executive Officer of Multicultural Aged Care Inc., since 2006. She is a Founding Member of the Migrant Women's Lobby Group and has been its Training Coordinator since 1997.

Professor Dorothy Keefe

For outstanding public service in the areas of public health, medical research and oncology.

Professor Keefe is a recognised innovator whose commitment to excellence has brought long-term and significant value, not only to individuals and families affected by cancer but also to the community of South Australia as a whole.

Mr Graham Ormsby

For service to the community, particularly youth.

Service to Youth Council (SYC) is a non-government, not-for-profit community service organisation that employs over 400 people across South Australia and Victoria and has three operating divisions: HYPA (formerly known as SYC Youth Agency); Job Prospects and Training Prospects.

Ms Barbara Wieland

For distinguished service to public administration in, and to the community of, South Australia through the delivery and reform of mental health services.

Ms Wieland left Health SA during 2012 after 40 years' distinguished service in the public mental health sector in South Australia. She is currently employed in Aged Care.

Ms Jill Lang

SACOSS would also like to congratulate former Director of the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOS) Jill Lang, who was honoured for her significant service to the community and to the not-for-profit sector.

Jill was the Founding Chair of the Queensland Community Services Futures Forum and launched the 'Good Work, Decent Wages' Campaign in 2008. This QCOS campaign highlighted the need for adequate remuneration for community service workers to ensure quality service delivery, and resulted in industry support for increased wages and government funding for the increases. Jill has worked closely with SACOSS in her role as National Coordinator of Anti-Poverty Week since 2011.



Editorial

Ross Womersley
Executive Director, SACOSS

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The world keeps changing and I have no doubt you will have all noticed this edition of SACOSS News sees us taking on a whole new look. This is thanks to our very own Communications Officer Marnie Round and freelance designer Elly Potter. The content is just as stimulating and provocative as you have come to expect and we hope you love it as much as we do. Do let us know.

In this edition we take a good look at this whole “Big Society” thingamajig. That’s one of the problems with this idea from the UK called Big Society – it’s not easy to define what the term actually means. Here we have invited a number of different people to offer their insights and you will find some thoughtful analysis of some of the thinking that sits behind the concept. With perspectives from the UK we hear from Nick Ellison, Professor of Sociology & Social Policy at the University of Leeds; and Julia Slay (who presented at this year’s ACOSS Conference in Adelaide) from New Economics Foundation. With a view from Australia, Christopher Stone from Centre for Policy Development looks at sector diversity in public services and the question of ‘who does what?’

We also take a close look at the recent South Australian State Budget.

It was a good budget for people who live with a disability and their families, with confirmation the Weatherill Government has made a commitment to fund the NDIS and to bring forward some of that funding so the scheme could move to full implementation earlier than anticipated. We also saw some good announcements about investments in social housing (still possibly one of the most critical issues across the country), a reinvestment in 10-12 financial counsellors, \$30 per annum boosts to the water concession, and funding to establish a specialist consumer credit legal service (CCLS). All issues SACOSS had been strongly advocating for. All extremely welcome!

This winter edition of SACOSS News gives you a State Budget overview and looks at the wins and losses for our sector. We also look into the big win for SACOSS and the community in the form of CCLS funding, as well as a wrap-up of our really successful Post-Budget Breakfast with the Treasurer.

One thing we have noted in both state and federal budgets is the volatility of the revenue stream underpinning state budgets. The thing that concerns us about this is that we all want great community services. We want good public transport, good schools, good roads, a good rehabilitative justice system, a good health system, great public services and good community services for more vulnerable members of our community.

Yes, these are all made possible by a healthy economy. And yes, governments do need to ensure they have efficient ways of organising these things. However, without a reliable revenue stream, state governments are constantly exposed. We think there is a strong case for tax reform both at a state and federal level and SACOSS will be working with our COSS cousins across the country to build a campaign around this issue.

Thinking back to the Federal Budget in May one of the most exciting elements was the announcement around funding for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (which was launched on July 1st as Disability Care Australia). The other big ticket item that we should all be excited by was the decision to invest in Education reforms proposed in the Gonski report. Across the country there are people who live with disability and families who have struggled without much of the support they need to get access to the good things in life. Equally we know that a great education is a fundamental stepping stone to good life opportunities.

The incredibly disappointing thing about the Federal Budget was realising the government wasn’t going to move on increasing the NewStart Allowance. There is no end of evidence that these base level allowances like NewStart and Youth allowance are increasingly unliveable and especially so for anyone who is unemployed for any extended period of time. Instead of increasing the allowances the government decided to ease off the earnings restrictions which mean people are able to earn an extra \$20 per week before their allowance starts to be reduced. Not all that helpful given 4 out of 5 people on Newstart don’t have any current employment.

By the time this hits your letter box, we will have run our Hardship & Affordability: Perspectives on Energy and Water conference. I want to extend my thanks to everyone who participated, as well as our conference sponsors. We can’t understate the importance of getting responses to hardship to join up between the sector, government, regulators, industry, and consumers - the conference was certainly a good step in this direction.

One issue SACOSS is taking aim at is power disconnections. South Australia has the highest electricity prices in the country and amongst the most disconnections. We believe no-one should have their power cut-off because they can’t afford to pay their bill. Keep your eye out for further information on this campaign in coming editions.

I hope you enjoy the ideas and discussions this SACOSS New brings.

Big Society and Sector Diversity in Public Services: The Question of 'Who does What?'



Christopher Stone

Research Director, Public Service Research Program
Centre for Policy Development

Big Society, the political manifesto of the UK Prime Minister David Cameron, claimed to be a re-imagining of the role of government. Its rhetoric was all about giving resources and control to the community, and so it was welcomed by many in the UK's community sector. The reality now acknowledged by many community leaders in the UK is that its implementation has done substantial damage. Despite this there are indications that Big Society ideas will be imported to Australia. In part the damage done in the UK is due to the large scale cuts that accompanied the Big Society reforms, but the reforms themselves have also imposed substantial strains. It is important to acknowledge that any Big Society style reforms implemented in Australia must not be, as they arguably were in the UK, a shield for cuts to social and community services. However, it is also critical to examine the mistakes of Big Society reforms so that these are not repeated here.

In May 2012 the Centre for Policy Development (CPD) released a report, 'Big Society and Australia', which examined the effects of Big Society in the UK¹ We looked at a number of reforms including the flagship Work Programme scheme, where the delivery of employment assistance to those on welfare was outsourced.² Under the scheme, responsibility for delivering employment services within a region is taken on by prime contractors who are then able to subcontract the work to smaller localised organisations, who in turn can subcontract specific aspects of the work, such as training or drug and alcohol counselling. This was compared with Australia's outsourced employment services regime, where the outsourcing occurs via a uniform contract. It should be noted that a further difference between the two schemes is that the Work Programme is only for those who have been job seeking for specified periods of time.

Australian employment services have been outsourced for 15 years, first under the Job Network and later the similar Job Services Australia scheme³ and a number of reports have identified serious problems.

There was one significant difference in the outcomes of the two schemes, and that was in the diversity of service providers engaged. Big Society rhetoric promises a diversity of service providers and on the face of it the regional prime contractor model of outsourcing could provide just that. The prime contracts awarded to a mix of outsourcing corporations and large charitable organisations, both of which subcontract to gain the local knowledge and specialist expertise of smaller organisations. However, the reality is that the UK's Work Programme had substantially poorer service provider diversity. While Australia has roughly equal numbers of not for profit and private providers of employment services, in the UK 35 of 40 regional Work Programme contracts were awarded to corporations, dominated by large corporations such as Deloitte, A4e and Serco. And small charities reported being used as 'bid candy', being listed on a prime contractor bid as a potential subcontractor, but receiving minimal subcontracting work.

In February of this year CPD released a follow-up report, 'Whatever happened to the Big Society' which found further research confirming the strain that small and local community organisations were under⁴. One very interesting statistic discovered by this research was that only 41% of charities interviewed had a good relationship with their lead providers when the provider was a private organisation, compared to 80% when the lead provider was a charity. This highlights a weakness in the thinking

1 J Whelan, et al, *Big Society and Australia: How the UK government is dismantling the state and what it means for Australia*, Centre for Policy Development, Sydney, 2012, cpd.org.au/2012/05/big-society-how-the-uk-government-is-dismantling-the-state-and-what-it-means-for-australia/.

2 Ibid, pp57-59.

3 Some outsourcing of employment services occurred prior to the Job Network program, but it was much more limited in scope.

4 C Elliott, *Whatever happened to the Big Society?*, Centre for Policy Development, Sydney, 2013, cpd.org.au/2013/02/whatever-happened-to-the-big-society/.

of Big Society advocates. They tend to conflate the community and private sectors, when the two have very different strengths. There is also an assumption that both sectors are always superior to the public sector. The strengths that government provision can bring are impossible to demonstrate when public sector has been almost entirely removed from both schemes. However, in other areas where public provision is present, it can be seen that this sector has its own strengths. For example, a Productivity Commission report on hospitals found that public hospitals kept costs low on diagnostics and prosthetics; and private and community sector hospitals achieved lower costs on pharmaceuticals and general hospital charges⁵. So a genuine diversity of providers gives a greater range of strengths, and the possibility that the different sectors can learn from each other to improve performance overall.

Another advantage of provider diversity is that different sectors in the same service delivery area will frequently be doing somewhat different jobs. This means a broader range of needs are being met. Again looking at hospitals, the Productivity Commission report showed different sectors as having different demographics of patients, focusing on different procedures, and existing in different geographic areas. Another example is vocational education. In Victoria last year TAFE delivered more than three-quarters of courses in Mining; Information Media and Telecommunications; Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services; and Construction. By contrast, private registered training organisations delivered more than three-quarters of courses in Wholesale Trade and Retail Trade⁶.

It should be acknowledged that diversity of sectors in provision is not sufficient in itself. Poor design of outsourcing regime can undermine the advantages of diversity. For example, the problems in Australian employment services were found in both private and community sector providers⁷. Fraudulent reporting, neglect of vulnerable groups, and a focus on measures of outcomes rather than real results, are not features generally associated with the community sector. However, there is evidence that the tight funding margins meant that all providers needed to 'play the system' to survive. Despite the existence of two peak bodies that have been successful in getting the attention of government, over time the regulatory contractual provision increased, but funding did not. In 2003 the government had to provide what was in effect a \$30 million bail-out for Job Network providers. In essence government asked for too much from too little. This raises the question as to whether this would have happened if government had had its own experience of delivery to draw on.

5 Productivity Commission, *Public and Private Hospitals*, Productivity Commission Research Report, Canberra, 2009, www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/hospitals/report.

6 C Stone, *Valuing Skills: Why vocational training matters*, Centre for Policy Development, Sydney, 2012, cpd.org.au/2012/11/valuing-skills/

7 P Murray, A Job Network for Job Seekers, Discussion Paper, Catholic Social Services, 2006, www.cssa.org.au/storage/CSSA_Job_Network_Discussions_Paper_O_O.pdf.

So, for a range of reasons, sector diversity in public service delivery is important. But managing this diversity may not be as simple as a competitive tendering process. Sophisticated assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of various kinds of providers will be required. There is already research addressing the question of how to manage sector diversity.

Three examples are:

- Co-production, an approach which sees the recipients of public services as potential contributors to their delivery. This recognises the expertise, not only of different sectors, but of all actors involved in services⁸
- Collective Impact, a model to coordinate different organisations (community and public sector) so as to use resources most effectively. The concept is that there are a number of organisations helping people along the "cradle to career" pathway. Often organisations in different areas share targets, but resources can be far more effective at one part of the pathway⁹
- Public Value Chain, a method for choosing the best service delivery arrangements. The purposes of a service are specified, the actors and activities that could be involved in achieving these purposes are mapped, and the costs and benefits relating to impacts, relationships and the running of the service itself, are weighed up to determine what outsourcing should take place¹⁰

Such research could provide the basis for developing practical frameworks for devising the best structures to manage diversity in different service areas. One of the lessons Australia needs to learn from the UK's implementation of Big Society reforms, is that creating genuine sector diversity in the provision of public services is complex, difficult, and necessary.

The **Centre for Policy Development** is a public interest think-tank dedicated to seeking out creative viable ideas and innovative research to inject into Australia's policy debates. The Centre's website can be found at cpd.org.au

8 L Stephens, J Ryan-Collins, and D Boyle, *Co-production: A Manifesto for growing the core economy*, New Economics Foundation, 2008, www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/co-production.

9 J Kania and M Kramer, 'Collective Impact', Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter, 2011, pp36-41.

10 J Alford and J O'Flynn, *Rethinking public service delivery: Managing with external providers*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.



Evaporation of the Big Society

Julia Slay

Senior Researcher & Social Policy Program Coordinator
New Economics Foundation (UK)

Since the election in 2010, England's public sphere has been shaped by new ideas that have grave implications for the welfare state. A new austerity in public spending has seen the deepest and fastest cuts in public spending since the Second World War. We have a call for more "open public services"¹, with new providers invited in to deliver services on the assumption that competition will improve efficiency. Our benefits system becomes ever more punitive, at a time when those out of work are struggling to meet their basic needs. Ideas about the deserving and the undeserving poor enter mainstream debate once again, and politicians enhance this false division with toxic language about 'strivers' and 'skivers'².

This is the economic backdrop to a concept called the 'Big Society'³. Promoted by the Conservatives in the run up to the last election, it became the framing of its social policy. Its central premise is that people and communities should have more rights and powers to take control of, and run, public services. Advocates of the Big Society see it as a way to hand power back to the people, strengthen social networks, and revitalise local communities. Critics⁴ see it as a vacuous term which is used to legitimise the cuts, that fails to take account of structural challenges, such as inequality. They also fear it will lead to growing inequalities within society.

Yet now, were you to mention the Big Society to those working in and around the public sector, you might be greeted with a roll of the eyes, or a dismissive shrug. The term has all but disappeared from public discourse. I have a Google Alert set up on the term, and over the past three years have seen the frequency of mentions on the web go steadily downwards. Many weeks, the alert doesn't come at all. Some of the specific policies still stand – just: the Community Rights to Bid, Buy and Run public services; the legislation to enact Neighbourhood Planning; the 500 community organisers deployed across the country to stimulate social action; the Big Society Bank, which doesn't seem quite so big in comparison to the funding gaps many local authorities and voluntary

sector organisations now find themselves with. A strong argument could be made to suggest that the concept – as a political project – was a resounding failure. On the front line of public services, it holds little weight. Here are, what I think, are the main reasons for its evaporation.

1. Forgetting that the social and the economic are interdependent

Our work⁵ has shown that as economic insecurity increases, people become more inward looking, and focussed on meeting their basic needs: just getting by from day to day. This leaves many people more insular, focussed on meeting their basic needs and less able to connect with others, and take local action. One of the weakest planks in the foundations of the Big Society has proved to be that the Government's ambitions for a Big Society failed to account for the reality of people's economic conditions, which prevent many from having the material resources needed to get involved in local action.

2. The core economy is weakened

The core economy refers to the sum of all the activity done by people and families up and down the country. Informal caring, bringing up children, local campaigning and civic action, involvement faith groups and peer networks. This core economy can flourish if it is strengthened and supported, or it can be weakened, if the conditions which make all this activity possible are eroded.

A decent income, a moderate amount of disposable time, and access to good quality public services will support the core economy to thrive and flourish. Policies which place an ever increasing burden on the core economy, will serve to weaken it, intensifying the need for support from families and communities, and negatively impacting on our well-being. Many current policies have contributed to weakening the core economy: reductions in child and working tax credits, support for carers and reduced funding for local civic groups. If the core economy doesn't function as the government expects, in terms of expertise and capacity, the foundations of the Big Society are in jeopardy.

1 www.openpublicservices.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/

2 www.neweconomics.org/blog/entry/mythbusters-strivers-versus-skivers

3 www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Big_Society.aspx

4 www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/ten-big-questions-about-the-big-society

5 www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/everyday-insecurity



3. The voluntary sector is in crisis

As the cuts in public spending have started to take place, the capacity of the voluntary sector has been eroding, and many reports from people we spoke to indicated that the sector will be decimated within the next five years. A huge amount of informal activity is supported and co-ordinated by the voluntary sector: everything from running volunteer programmes, to providing the space for peer support groups to meet, and running local campaigns. It was a sector which embodied the best ambitions of the Big Society. The sector now faces formidable challenges: increasing demand; more acute needs that require more intensive support; scarce resources diverted from lower level, preventative support and a more competitive and commercial funding environment.

4. Not all 'communities' are equal

The Big Society is concept that hides the workings of power, paying scant attention to how inequalities of time and resources differ across areas and groups. Poorer areas have been disproportionately affected by the cuts, while their residents are among the worst off, and most in need of support. The Big Society offers an opportunity for those with time and resources to take over local assets that are at risk of being shut down, or bid to run services, or develop neighbourhood plans: an opportunity not afforded to those who have little discretionary time due to caring responsibilities, for example.

5. Separating state from people

The Big Society offered a vision of a smaller state, and greater people power. Yet instead of offering partnership, the Big Society actively separates the state from local communities: an either/or dichotomy, where public goods and activities are either the responsibility of the state,

or the individual. A more successful vision might have positioned partnership, solidarity and reciprocity at the heart of a new social contract, and used approaches such as co-production⁶ to reconfigure public services.

6. As window dressing for the cuts.

The language of the Big Society has been slowly eroded over the past three years. Initially met with mixed responses, from guarded optimism to outright scepticism, it is now seen as a vacuous term, without much substance beyond a few isolated initiatives. The concurrent cuts in public spending meant that the concept lacked popular legitimacy, effectively became seen as a sales pitch for the cuts.

The combination of all these factors points to the gaping hole at the heart of the Big Society programme. This is the expectation that social solidarity, mutuality and civic action can thrive in a climate of austerity, while the market extends further into the provision of public goods, and competition is encouraged over collaboration.

The **New Economics Foundation** is a UK-based independent think-and-do tank that inspires and demonstrates real economic well-being. Its website can be found at www.neweconomics.org

⁶ www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/co-production



Big Idea? View From The UK

Nick Ellison

Professor of Sociology & Social Policy
University of Leeds

There is little doubt that Big Society thinking has invigorated elements of the Conservative Party, putting them in touch with certain strands of 'pre-Thatcherite' Tory thinking. Although Tory right-wingers continue to adhere to traditional Thatcherite principles of tax cuts and privatisation, a new generation of Conservatives has lauded Cameron for pulling the Party out of an apparent near-terminal decline. Certainly, Tim Montgomerie, founder of the website Conservative Home and an important critical friend, regards Cameron as having drafted 'the most interesting definition of conservatism since the Thatcher-Reagan era', essentially by reconciling elements of economic liberalism with an older more 'social' strand of Tory 'One Nationism'. These twin pillars of Conservatism — one could say the abiding principles of British Conservative thinking — are encapsulated within the idea of the Big Society, which itself is made up of three closely related strands of thought: Burkean, pragmatic and compassionate conservatism.

The former looks back to Edmund Burke and, in particular, his belief that it is the 'little platoons' of intermediate groups and institutions that sustain the myriad relationships and forms of reciprocity that define civil society. There is a faith here that these groups (including the family), that operate in the space between the state and the individual, act to control centralised power in the interests of 'bottom up' social cohesion.

These ideas have been endorsed by the Coalition Government in fairly pragmatic fashion, not least in the predilection for 'nudging' that is now visible in Downing Street and the Cabinet Office; the possibility, as one Minister put it, to give 'a gentle push to society to move in a direction of greater responsibility, or greater coherence, or more stability, or neighbourliness, or better health'. The point, it seems, is to develop policies informed by the 'hidden wealth' of the 'world of friendship, care and gift-based exchanges' that formal economics ignores, using informal relationships, based on trust, and then stretching them 'to reach a little further than [they] might otherwise do'.

Compassionate conservatism is, in some ways, the most influential of the three strands that comprise Big Society thinking. It is closely associated with Tim Montgomerie and Tories' ex-Leader, Iain Duncan Smith, now Secretary of State at the Department of Work and Pensions.

Montgomerie and Duncan Smith founded the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) in 2003, a Tory think tank that fashioned key ideas about social policy for the Cameron team ahead of the 2010 General Election. The portrayal of a 'Broken Britain' suffering from too much central state interference, welfare dependency, family breakdown and poverty allowed Cameron and the Conservative leadership to talk about the 'broken society' and the need for a 'Big Society' to fix it. Complementing this approach is a rather different strand of compassionate conservatism advanced by Phillip Blond, founder of the Conservative think tank ResPublica. Blond calls for a 'remoralisation' of society and the development of a 'new civil state [which] would restore what the welfare state had destroyed'

His vision, though in some ways radical, shares with the CSJ a highly traditional understanding of individual responsibility, the importance of marriage and the family and the potentially detrimental effects of central state intervention. Each of these themes was evident in speeches delivered by Cameron before the 2010 election campaign, as the following example makes clear:

When you are paid more not to work than to work, when you are better off leaving your children than nurturing them, when our welfare system tells young girls that having children before finding security of work and a loving relationship means home and cash now...when social care penalises those who have worked hard by forcing them to sell their home...when your attempts at playing a role in society are met with inspection, investigation and interrogation, is it any wonder that our society is broken? While it may well be that certain sections of society could benefit from greater control of their immediate destinies, it is not clear that the most disadvantaged groups in society would benefit to the same degree.

For Cameron, breaking up 'state monopolies' and moving from a 'bureaucratic world...to a post-bureaucratic world' would allow charities, social enterprises and companies to provide public services in ways that would remove the central state from people's lives. The absence of the state would require people to be more accountable, however, and to exercise greater responsibility and act in particular ways. While it may well be that certain sections of society could benefit from greater control of their immediate destinies, it is not clear that the most disadvantaged groups in society would benefit to the same degree.



Blond on Blond

Phillip Blond is a political thinker and social and economic commentator, and one of the leading exponents of The Big Society. He has been lauded as 'a driving force' behind UK Prime Minister David Cameron's Big

Society push. In 2009 Blond founded ResPublica – 'an independent and non-partisan think tank which focuses on developing practical solutions to enduring socio-economic and cultural problems in the UK' www.respublica.org

In 2012 Phillip Blond was a speaker at The Australian Centre For Social Innovation's (TACSI) Social Innovators Dialogues in Adelaide. His talk and the subsequent panel discussion can be viewed at the TACSI site here www.tacsi.org.au/publications/talks/

During his time in Australia Phillip Blond also featured on Radio National's Big Ideas program. Highlights of *Does Australia Need a Big Society? Phillip Blond in Conversation with Peter Shergold* is available here www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/big-society--philip-blond/4217882 [17 August 2012. Presented by the Menzies Research Centre]

Indeed, the opposite could be the case: a reduced state, 'nudge' politics, greater local autonomy and a more active civil society for the majority may need to be bought at the price of greater state interference, 'shove politics' and the increasing enforcement of specific policies for the worst-off groups.

This characterisation of a bifurcated 'Big Society', where certain groups will prosper and others fall under the auspices of an 'enforcer state', is likely to be played out differently in the different policies of government ministries. Some areas of government, for example, may be able to sustain programs that do indeed extend greater powers to certain groups of citizens. However, these are likely to differ in both idiom and intent from how Duncan Smith and his advisors understand welfare issues at the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Publications from the CSJ and subsequent DWP legislation leave little doubt that very tough work incentives, a stress on 'individual responsibility' and an emphasis on marriage and the family will be the abiding 'demands' placed upon those most likely to have to depend on the state for their welfare. In short, the Big Society is only likely to be 'big' for some.

Social policy apart, how feasible is the Big Society project as a whole? First, there is a problem of resources. Recent research by Anna Coote at the new economics foundation claims that government support for Big Society initiatives will be inadequate. The transition from central and local

state services to a panoply of voluntary, charitable and social enterprise initiatives is likely to be expensive, but, to date, only £470 million has been allocated over four years to help community groups build the Big Society. Conversely, the government has removed £4.5 billion from the charities budget as part of its spending cuts.

A second issue relates to the highly diverse funding regime in the UK third sector. Currently, the great bulk of sector funding goes to just a few large organisations; roughly 87 per cent of the sector receives just 5.4 per cent of the available income. It is therefore difficult to understand how organisations will be able to develop levels of service delivery that are both socially and spatially coherent. Decentralisation and greater local control, in other words, may be bought at the cost of a relative equality of provision.

Finally, other potential problems include resource issues of time, expertise and access. As one unnamed senior government advisor recently pointed out, the Big Society will 'need an army of people with spare time and lots of energy to set up schools, form patient groups, become police commissioners, help run local services and analyse all the data being published to hold organisations to account

Rates of volunteering are currently low and opposition politicians point to a good deal of institutional resistance to the pace at which the Coalition Government is attempting to reorganise public services. Finally, there is concern within the civil service that the removal of services and the relocation of responsibility for their delivery within voluntary, charitable and private sector organisations could compromise the state's formal accountability for service provision, while also creating a significant democratic deficit in the delivery of public services at local level.

This article first appeared in the **Victorian Council of Social Service (VCSS)** magazine InSight. It has been edited here for brevity. The full text including references is available at <http://vcoss.org.au/insight/issue-3-setting-the-agenda/>



2013-14 State Budget Highlights

Jo De Silva

SACOSS Senior Policy Officer

The 2013-14 State Budget provided some hope within the community and social services sector, with increased funding for a number of services, and the implementation of new financial and legal services in South Australia.

Along with increased funds for financial counselling and provision for a new consumer credit legal service, the investment in the Affordable Housing Stimulus Package is also extremely welcome. This housing package should help to ensure desperately needed social and community housing becomes available. As the housing sector remains a key employer, this direct investment also ensures much needed jobs will continue to be available locally.

The decision by the government in this budget to bring forward funds to ensure full funding for the NDIS is also very positive. This extremely welcome investment will assist a group of people, many of whom have very limited support to access a good life. The early release of money is likely to mean shorter waiting lists and the ability to make services more accessible to people in need.

As a crucial pathway linked to employment, a \$27million investment in skills and training will ensure that more people have the opportunity to develop the skills they need to fit the work that is available.

Further funding to promote community development in the APY Lands is also welcome. The rehabilitation and restructuring of major roads will lessen dangers to drivers, increase access to remote services, and promote greater employment opportunities. Extra funding to provide APY communities with more health workers, as well as the continuation of the therapeutic services for a further 2 years, will also be an extremely important means of support and development for these communities.

The decision to increase the current water concession by \$30 a year will be very helpful for a wide range of South Australian householders who have struggled with recent price increases. While welcoming this increase, SACOSS believes all energy and water concessions should be properly indexed so that struggling people are not left behind as real prices increase. SACOSS calls on both the government and opposition to commit in future to properly indexing these concessions.



The 2013-14 Budget also fulfils a promise by the government to pay "its fair share" in response to the ASU's recent equal pay case for social and community service workers. These wage increases are deserved and long overdue. Service providers have been anxious about their capacity to meet increased wage costs, and this funding commitment ensures services won't be cut and workers will be properly rewarded.

It is important to note that while SACOSS welcomes all of the new and extended funding for some of South Australia's most vulnerable citizens, we are concerned that a considerable amount of the additional expenditure in this budget is funded by one-off income flows. SACOSS believes that no matter which political party holds government in South Australia, there is an outstanding issue – South Australia needs a stable and sustainable revenue base which can ensure South Australians receive the critical support they continue to expect from the government.

Item	Description	SACOSS Comments
Affordable Housing Stimulus Package \$220m (over 18 months)	<p>This initiative provides for construction of 930 houses and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$50m for 175 new affordable houses • \$27m to fast track construction of Housing SA homes, including specialised homes for people with disability and Aboriginal people • \$23.6m for the Better Neighbourhoods Program • \$38.7m for housing construction grants • \$12.4m to continue the stamp duty concession 	<p>SACOSS congratulates the government on bringing forward \$150m of expenditure. The stock of Housing SA homes has been reduced by 10,000 over the last decade, and while this initiative does not fully redress this loss, it is still very welcome. SACOSS also recognises that the economic benefits which flow from this direct investment are very important for South Australia.</p> <p>See detailed comments on specific items in SACOSS State Budget Snapshot.</p>
Additional disability services support \$97.4m (over the next 4 years)	<p>This initiative provides for additional support to people living with disability and for their carers, including accommodation support, community support, community access and respite services. This initiative enables South Australia to fully implement the National Disability Insurance Scheme from 2018-19.</p>	<p>SACOSS welcomes this measure and lauds the government for allocating necessary and substantial funding to realise its commitment to the full implementation of the Disability Care system for all South Australian living with a disability by 2018.</p>
Increased Skills for All industry training \$27m	<p>This measure provides for additional funding to free and subsidised courses.</p>	<p>Though overall expenditure decreases over the forward estimates (from \$20m in 2013-14 to \$7m in 2014-15), SACOSS welcomes the continued funding commitment to invest in skills.</p>
Water concession increase \$21.1m	<p>Increase of \$30 per annum</p>	<p>The increase in the concession is welcome, but SA continues to have the nation's highest water prices.</p>
Funding Community Sector Pay Equity \$14.3m (over 4 years) plus an additional \$597k (paid in 2012-13)	<p>On 8 June 2011 the State Government announced a commitment to fund its share of the increased costs that result from the Fair Work Australia ERO for workers in the community services sector. Until this year's Budget the state government's funding allocation has not been fully costed but this initiative provides funds for the government's share over the next four years.</p>	<p>The extra funds have been allocated in response to community sector feedback that the government's previous budgetary commitment would not cover the costs of implementing the ERO. SACOSS strongly welcomes the government following through on its commitment to pay its share of the costs incurred by non-government organisations in paying employees entitlements under the ERO.</p>

The full **SACOSS State Budget Snapshot 2013-14** can be found on the Publications page of the SACOSS website at www.sacoss.org.au

Consumer Credit Legal Services: Budget win for SACOSS and the Community



Marnie Round
SACOSS Communications Officer

Consumer credit issues can have serious impacts on people's lives, including their mental health, relationships, jobs and life prospects. Legal processes can be complex and confusing. Where a legal problem can result in loss of property including the family home, it is especially important that help is available.

Adequate support available for vulnerable people facing consumer credit issues, preferably at an early stage before the debt becomes a legal issue, is critical. Even when there is no doubt a debt is owed, legal support can make a huge difference in negotiating terms of repayment or protecting a defendant's interest in the often complex processes.

In 2012 the Government of South Australia commissioned SACOSS to undertake some research into this area. In January this year SACOSS released South Australian Consumer Credit Legal Services: A Scoping Study.

The key findings of the report include that, in any one year:

- 11.6% of South Australian adults have at least one consumer credit problem;
- 6.3% or 84, 000 South Australian adults have a legal problem arising from consumer credit issues, three quarters of whom also have other legal issues;
- For 21,000 people the consumer credit issue was their only legal problem;
- 10,000 South Australian adults did not get the legal help they needed in relation to their consumer credit problem.

In undertaking the research SACOSS consulted widely with key stakeholders. It was agreed that a number of potential and needed improvements recommended. These were:

- Changes to court forms to better direct people to free legal help;
- Provision of legal financial counselling assistance at court during relevant court lists;
- Co-location of financial counsellors in community legal centres;
- Increased funding for existing community legal centres;
- Advertising of the Legal Services Commission's legal help-line and the Doorways financial counselling help-line; and,
- Establishment of a small specialist Consumer Credit Legal Centre.

These were subsequently reinforced in discussions with the government and in our 2013 State Budget Submission.



State Budget Outcomes

It is extremely welcome that the state government recognised the need for Consumer Credit Legal Services in the last Budget with an announcement of funding for the development and implementation of a consumer credit legal service. It wasn't as much funding as requested, but it is a good start. SACOSS hopes it will be built on in the future to ensure people have access to financial counselling and legal support, the ability to negotiate with creditors, and knowledge of their rights early in the debt process.

The quarterly SACOSS Cost of Living Reports continue to highlight how acute cost of living pressures are for people on low incomes. The need for access to free independent financial guidance is an important protection against financial disaster. SACOSS has been campaigning for increased funding for financial counselling for more than two and a half years since 40 counselling positions were cut from Families SA by the then-Treasurer Kevin Foley.

The modest reinvestment in 2012 with the announcement of a Utilities Literacy Program, and the state government's 2013-14 State Budget funding commitment for 10-12 new community based financial counsellors in South Australia is welcomed.

Supreme Court Possessions List hearings

During May and June SACOSS spent time monitoring the Possessions List in the SA Supreme Court which deals with the forfeiture of houses resulting from non-payment of mortgages. Witnessing these proceedings is heartbreaking.

Each week around 30 cases are heard – on average 9 houses are repossessed, and in one List SACOSS sat in on, only 3 of the 30 defendants had legal representation. What becomes apparent, which is so often forgotten, is that behind court statistics are people and families who are struggling with spiralling cost of living pressures, inadequate incomes, or life changing events which have left them vulnerable.

Losing your home without a fight

Liam Mannix from InDaily sat in on a Possessions List hearing with SACOSS. You can read his moving feature story from 24 June here:

indaily.com.au/news/2013/06/24/losing-your-home-without-a-fight/



SACOSS Post-Budget Breakfast with the Treasurer

Vivian Clark
SACOSS Events Coordinator

Following what proved to be a positive Budget for much of the community and social services sector, the 2013 SACOSS Post-Budget Breakfast with the State Premier and Treasurer, The Hon. Jay Weatherill was held at the Pavilion on South Tce on Thursday 13 June.

The morning provided a unique opportunity for SACOSS members to hear the Treasurer address the community services sector directly. Those in attendance also had the opportunity to put questions to Mr Weatherill, and many members took this opportunity to raise issues of concern with him.

Mr Weatherill emphasised that, this year, the Budget was aspirational and reflected the values of the community. He stated that governments need to be more than accountants – that their role is not simply balancing budgets – and that supporting people through times of change is imperative.

In relation to at least one significant policy issue, the Disability Care scheme, Mr Weatherill demonstrated conviction in this belief. Mr Weatherill stated that he had repeatedly heard commentators say that the current climate of financial austerity raises questions as to how governments can afford to implement Disability Care. In response to such comments Mr Weatherill asserted that even in difficult financial climates governments still have a role in providing adequate services, and pointed out that the alternative – not funding services – does not erase costs, but rather shifts costs on to individuals, and these costs can be stymieing. Mr Weatherill's sentiment that the government has a responsibility to the community and cannot simply foist costs onto individuals was welcomed.

The need for independence in the community sector was also emphasised, and in particular, that government funding should not be tied to control or the silencing of public debate. The Treasurer welcomed the work of SACOSS and the sector in holding the government to account, advocating on issues as well as providing services, even when receiving government funding.



SACOSS would like to thank event sponsors Statewide Super and CBB.

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- 1 Hon Jay Weatherill
- 2 L-R Reverend Peter Sandeman - Anglicare SA
Rob Foggo - ac.care
Major Susan Wallace - Salvation Army
Chris Arbon -UnitingCare Wesley Bowden
- 3 Tauto Sansbury - SA Aboriginal Coalition for Social Justice
- 4 Andrew Dow - St Vincent de Paul Society (SA)
Christine Belford - Parkinsons SA
- 5 Hon Jay Weatherill
- 6 L-R Michael Hynes - Junction Australia
Carmel Rosier - Community Housing Association
Scott Langford - Junction Housing
- 7 Cheryl Axleby - Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement

All photos by Marnie Round



Living With Dementia in Country SA

Phil Saunders

Policy Officer, Alzheimer's Australia SA

There are 7,100 people living with dementia across South Australia's country regions, nearly one third of the state's total.

From July to November 2012 Alzheimer's Australia SA visited the state's country regions to get a picture of what life was like for these people and their families. They met with over 320 consumers and service providers in a series of forums. Other people, not able to attend, commented through email or phone calls.

Participants spoke about an increasing awareness of dementia as a disease in the rural communities of South Australia. This was reducing stigma and encouraging people to seek diagnosis earlier than in the past. However, problems with getting a timely diagnosis, limited services and barriers to getting to them, remained critical issues for people living with dementia and their families seeking support in country South Australia.

Participants sought more information for people living with dementia and their families, links to services and improved services in range and number. This, they said, would require individual assistance, a mix of greater service provider collaboration at the local level, a re-arrangement of existing resources including greater flexibility in service delivery and additional funding.

In the Budget context, participants spoke about the need to find resources within existing budgets at government and agency level, complementary to any new monies, to meet the issues raised and the actions outlined. Funding bodies needed understand that rural outcomes would come at a higher cost than metropolitan outcomes. Additional allowances for rural and remote regions should be added to baseline funds.

In her Foreword to the project report, the CEO of Alzheimer's Australia SA, Kathryn Cunningham said,

"We can all make a difference in the lives of people living with dementia and their families across country regions by accepting and working toward the challenge that confronts us. We need to consider and act upon these questions:

"What are you doing now for dementia consumers?

"What can you do better?

"What else can you do?"



Raising Awareness: Top Three Issues

Participants were asked for their Top Three Issues and Three Key Actions. For both consumers and service providers the top three issues were community services, continuing care and awareness. The consumer's three key actions were community services, continuing care, and care management. The three key actions for service providers were community services, awareness, and diagnosis.

Cost of Dementia in Country SA Questionnaire

As part of the country visits Alzheimer's Australia SA asked participants about the impact of dementia on their financial and personal lives and what would help them meet these costs.

Whilst less than one third (29%) of respondents indicated that the financial impact of dementia was large to very large, over a half (56%) stated that the personal impact was large to very large. **"It's often really hard to convince people that I'm having trouble coping and that my partner actually requires the care that they do."**

The project report was launched at Port Lincoln and Mt Gambier in late June. It is available by calling **Alzheimer's Australia SA** on 8372 2100, emailing sa.admin@alzheimers.org.au or visiting the SA page of www.fightdementia.org.au



Cutting of People's Electricity – the hidden impact

Jo De Silva
SACOSS Senior Policy Officer

South Australia has the highest power bills in the country. The bigger they get, the more people struggle to cope with them. Having power cut off can happen to anyone, especially working families and “at-risk” groups.

Many people are already struggling financially to support themselves and their families. Some are out of work and surviving on government assistance, others are in insecure work or employed full-time, while others are full-time carers to a family member. Regardless of their job situation, these people can struggle to make ends meet and afford the rising cost of living.

Electricity costs are one of the biggest household expenses. In addition to rent/ mortgage and food, electricity is one of the top three budgetary expenses. Consumers may try hard to keep their electricity costs down, by conservation and energy efficiency measures. They may also constantly be on the lookout for the best electricity deals. And yet they still find that limited incomes make paying power bills a real challenge. This is deepened by the fact that the value of the energy concessions that people on low incomes get aren't keeping up with rising power bills.

Having your power cut off can mean many things to a person or family. Cutting off people's power hurts the most vulnerable, the sick, the disadvantaged and children. It can mean depression, anxiety, fear, anger, helplessness and hopelessness. It's more than just not having heating and lights. It can mean you feel disconnected from society, from your family and friends.

In South Australia, around 5,000 households have their power cut off each year. These people are ordinary people facing ordinary difficulties, and yet they continue to pay the price for struggling to make ends meet.

SACOSS will continue to campaign on this issue, highlighting the impact of cutting off people's electricity. SACOSS believes that power is a basic human necessity and essential service.

The following case study is taken from a real life example:

Jacinta lives with her husband and two children aged seven and nine years old. They own their own house and are paying off their mortgage. Jacinta cares for her elderly parents who live nearby. Jacinta was disconnected from electricity on a Friday morning but managed to get reconnected again within the same day.

At the time Jacinta was disconnected, her bills were piling up and they couldn't find the money to pay them. Jacinta's electricity bill was around \$470. Although she was on a payment plan with her electricity company, requiring her to pay \$100 per week, she wasn't able to stick to it. Jacinta missed three payments in total, at different points in time (not in a row).

The first time she couldn't pay because she was in hospital sick and the second time she didn't have the money. She contacted her electricity provider both times to explain what had happened. The first time they said that she would have to pay a little extra to catch up.

The second time they called her and gave her a warning about possibly being disconnected. Jacinta made the first payment and then couldn't afford to make the second payment, resulting in the disconnection.

Although both Jacinta and her husband are employed, they struggle financially. Jacinta's husband earns around \$700 a week and pays \$270 each week to their mortgage. Jacinta has a casual job that doesn't bring in much money.

While Jacinta was disconnected for less than twenty-four hours, she describes the experience as very frightening, especially since her phone did not work during that time. Jacinta's eldest child suffers from migraines and when his temperature is too high he has fever convulsions and needs to have an ambulance arrive quickly.

This case study was taken from “Cut Off III: The Social Impact of Utility Disconnection” by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. The full report can be found on Centre's website www.piac.asn.au/projects/social-impact/introduction



Smoking in the workplace – whose responsibility?

Kate Kameniar
SACOSS Healthy Workers Adviser

Smoking rates among staff in the health and community services sector are frequently high and workplaces can inadvertently either make smoking easy and/or quitting more difficult, through their policies and practices. So what responsibility do community service organisations have in addressing smoking in the workplace?

While the health risks are known and accepted, smoking is commonly seen as a matter of personal choice. However, environmental factors play a key role in shaping and influencing individual behaviour. Normalising smoking through provision of designated areas can facilitate and encourage smoking. In some work environments, smoking can be a social behaviour, providing a shared sense of connectedness. These external factors can make it easier to smoke and much more difficult for those trying to quit or cut back.

Support for smoke free environments is increasing. The National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2007 included questions to gauge community support for measures to reduce problems associated with tobacco use. 82% of all respondents were in support of smoke free workplaces.

Workers in the health and community services sector are in a strong position to influence the health and behaviour of the people they support, especially where those people look up to them as role models. The fourth edition of

“Tobacco in Australia: Facts and Issues,” published online by Cancer Council Victoria in 2012, revealed that rates of smoking are significantly higher and the proportion of people who have never smoked is significantly lower in lower socio-economic groups.

As part of the Commonwealth funded Healthy Workers Healthy Futures initiative SACOSS, ASU and Quit SA held a free, practical forum Butt Out! Whose business is it anyway? On World No Tobacco Day (31 May). Twenty-seven managers and workers from the Health and Community Services Sector attended the forum which showcased some inspiring examples from organisations who have “been there, done that.” Sarah Sorterious from Hutt St Centre and Craig Hendry and Alex Bird from the Woolshed spoke of their inspiring journeys in becoming smoke free workplaces.

Hutt St Centre is a frontline agency providing services to 150-200 homeless and vulnerable people daily, spoke compellingly of the organisation’s smoke free journey. Hutt St Centre recognised smoking as a social justice issue, that by providing a smoke free environment as well as additional support to those wanting to quit they could provide their vulnerable clients with an opportunity they may not otherwise have had, the opportunity to quit smoking. The centre partnered with Quit SA and RDNS and underwent a period of staff and client consultation in the lead up to their successful transition on World No Tobacco Day 2011.



L-R Jody Anderson (ASU)
 Alex Bird (Woolshed)
 Craig Hendry (Woolshed)
 Kate Kameniar (SACOSS)
 Sarah Sorteriu (Hutt St Centre)

Craig Hendry and Alex Bird provided insight into the perspectives of a manager and client when the Woolshed became the first government run therapeutic community to go completely smoke free. The Woolshed is a residential facility which provides a structured program for clients experiencing dependency on alcohol and other drugs. As a manager Craig reinforced the importance of staff and client consultation periods and putting in place strategies and supports for staff and clients wanting to quit such as nicotine replacement therapy, individual counselling and support from Quit SA. From the client perspective, Alex spoke about the initial fears associated with quitting and the resulting empowerment once provided with the choice. One of the new found benefits associated with quitting for many of the residents was the amount of money saved, that could then be put towards bond money for future housing, paying any debts or fines, or providing for any dependents, giving clients a greater sense of control over their financial commitments.

The Healthy Workers Healthy Futures initiative is a Commonwealth funded project which aims to support organisations to create working environments that support employees to; increase physical activity improve nutrition decrease rates of smoking and reduce harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption.

For more information contact SACOSS Healthy Workers Adviser Kate Kameniar at katek@sacoss.org.au or ASU Healthy Workers Adviser Jody Anderson at JAnderson@asu-sant.asn.au

For non-government Health and Community Services Organisations wanting to go smoke free there are a number of free supports available.

Quit SA offers a range of supports that can be tailored to suit the organisation, including Quitskills Training and advice and support throughout the process.

More information is available on the Quit SA website www.quitsa.org.au or by phoning Jenni Gamble and Teri Lucas on 8291 4266.



Announcing Junction Australia - A Bridge to the Future

Graham Brown
CEO, Junction Australia

After almost 35 years of dedicated service to socially and economically disadvantaged South Australians, Junction Australia (formerly Southern Junction Community Services) recently launched its new name and brand. These changes open the way for the organisation to extend its unique services and innovative approaches wherever they are needed across the state and nation in the years to come.

What prompted this change?

A Board Strategic Planning process in 2011 recognised that our nation is changing and we needed to reposition the organisation in order to effectively pursue its mission and resulted in the casting of a bold 2020 Vision. That is, whilst the Junction group is a sound and respected independent service provider, it was determined that the organisation's legal structure and brand needed to be updated in order to increase its capacity to offer its increasingly diverse range of innovative services to people and communities, wherever they are needed across the state and nation in the future. The organisation therefore initiated a transformation into a new group structure in which Junction Australia (JA) will serve as the parent entity, with Junction Housing (JH) becoming a separate company limited by guarantee.

The drivers of this significant change included the following key factors:

- The community sector's resources are increasingly being sourced from the Commonwealth Government, which is demonstrating a preference to engage with larger, more sophisticated organisations that have the ability to provide high quality services across wider geographical regions, including across State borders.
- National regulation of the not-for-profit sector is a reality and the Junction Australia group has a responsibility to its stakeholders to demonstrate, and be recognised for, its sound governance, strong leadership and professional management against these increasingly high and robust standards. Current examples of the push toward national regulation include:
 - Establishment of the Australia Charities and Not for-profit Commission in late 2012
 - Introduction of National Regulation of the non-government Housing sector during 2013
 - Launch of Disability Care Australia on 1st July this year.

The new structure needed to enable both JA and JH to enter into innovative joint ventures, partnerships and alliances with other community organisations and the private sector that share JA's commitment to the realisation of our vision that:

"The value of all groups and individuals is actively demonstrated by the way that they are included and enabled to participate in their communities."

The Board and Management of Junction Australia acknowledge that an essential prerequisite to securing public funds, attracting corporate and philanthropic support, is the need to demonstrate the capability to consistently deliver high quality services, raise the organisation's profile and embrace both increased levels of accountability and rates of change.

It is our belief that both the general public and our current and future clients, tenants, participants and supporters have a right to be confident that they are receiving high quality services from a credible organisation that has the capacity to dynamically respond to the changing demographics of Australian communities, groups and individuals.

Junction Australia and Junction Housing are committed to being leading community organisations that share an integrated approach to enabling people to move from 'Crisis to Connectedness'.

We look forward to sustaining our existing collaborative relationships with other agencies, and to fostering new alliances with other independent groups across the state and nation that share our values and align with our social purposes, as we remain firmly committed to the task of: contributing to the safety and well-being of children; empowering and equipping young people to live well in the community; promoting and supporting the effectiveness of families; providing safe places for people to live, work, meet, learn and play.

The new **Junction Australia** website can be found at junctionaustralia.org.au





Barbara Garrett Scholarship

Damien Chalmers

Barbara Garrett Scholarship Recipient 2013

My name is Damien Chalmers and I was the successful applicant of the 2013 Barbara Garrett scholarship to participate in the Professional Management Program offered through Adelaide University's Executive Education Unit.

I work for St John's Youth Services as a Program Manager in the Next Step outreach program. This team of outreach workers support young people who have accessed crisis accommodation services in Adelaide to transition into longer term accommodation such as private rental, public and community housing.

My background has mainly related to direct service delivery in areas such as youth homelessness, youth justice and child protection. I have been working in a management position for roughly 18 months, being promoted from direct service delivery when the position became available. As such I had very little management experience or training prior to taking on this new position. I was fortunate enough to be directed to SACOSS' Barbara Garrett scholarship and after investigating Adelaide University's Professional Management Program felt it would contribute significantly to my professional growth, management of the outreach program, the running of the wider organisation with the main goal to achieve greater outcomes for the young people we work with.

The Professional Management Program (PMP) covers a range of modules which will assist Manager's in their day to day work. Modules include; Leading and Managing People, Financial Management, Lean Six Sigma, Project Management, Effective Change Management and Strategic Management. The 12 month program runs over 2 days roughly every 6 weeks and culminates in a multi-disciplinary case study exam followed by either a group or individual presentation on a strategic project.

The course has covered fundamental content for the effective management of people, finances, organisational processes, programs and projects, organisational change and strategic projects. While there has been a lean towards application of course content to private sector / commercial ventures, the course facilitators have been able to apply the content to the service sector. The PMP group which I have studied with come from private / commercial, government and non-government sectors and the course content has been able to be tailored to

cover all of our needs. Additionally, I have found the group I have studied with to be extremely supportive of each other regularly seeking and providing support through group emails, coffee catch ups and the occasional breakfast.

With completion of the PMP I will have strengthened essential managerial skills, learned my strengths and weaknesses when it comes to managing people as well as developing some knowledge which was not part of my Social Work background. Profitability ratios and determining a business' or organisations solvency is almost second nature now. I plan to use the knowledge gained over the last 12 months to deliver a Strategic Project presentation which has direct significance to the community sector, St John's Youth Services and Indigenous Youth experiencing homelessness. While this may only be a University course project at the moment, it may come to fruition and a new service could be operating to address levels of homelessness and contact with justice systems for Indigenous Youth.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all who have made this possible including; SACOSS, the Adelaide University Executive Education Unit, St John's Youth Services for supporting me to attend this program during my regular working hours and most importantly Barbara Garrett whom without the scholarship, would not have been at all possible.



Read about Barbara Garrett and her role with SACOSS at www.sacoss.org.au/about.html#history

Executive Education Unit
Leaders in Management Education



www.adelaide.edu.au/professions/execed

News from Marjorie Black House

Since the last edition, SACOSS has been working on a number of issues and submissions, including:

- Release of SACOSS State Budget Snapshot 2013
- 2013-14 SACOSS budget submission
- Member consultation re the Attorney General's Department discussion paper - Improving the Criminal Justice System for People with Disability Contact Dr Angie Bletsas at angie@sacoss.org.au if you'd like to be involved
- Submission to the Affordable Place to Live consultation
- Responding to SA Water's price determination
- Submission to AEMO on the value of customer reliability

And also in the pipeline...

- SACOSS Hardship & Affordability Conference: Perspectives on Energy & Water (10 July)
- Anti-Poverty Week (October 13-19)
- SACOSS on your radio (stay tuned)
- SACOSS website makeover
- A sustainable and edible front garden for Marjorie Black House

Get involved with SACOSS

SACOSS puts out a fortnightly eBulletin to our members listing brief descriptions of upcoming events, job vacancies, and other items relevant to the community services sector. If you'd like to make a submission check out the guidelines and contact details at www.sacoss.org.au/publications/ebulletin/index.html

If you haven't already you can subscribe to the eBulletin here too!

Follow us on Twitter @SACOSS

We aren't particularly witty in 140 characters or less, but we do like to discuss and share sector issues, news and events...and sometimes vintage filtered photos of our artistically positioned food, just so you know what we're having for lunch #yum

SACOSS News Spring edition

The Spring SACOSS News will be a spotlight on the federal election. If you'd like to contribute to it, please contact SACOSS Communications Officer Marnie Round at marnie@sacoss.org.au

Deadline for advertising and submissions is **Thursday 8 August 2013**.

Farewell Hannah Corbett

Hannah Corbett was employed by SACOSS as a Policy and Research Officer for a six-month project in relation to consumer credit legal services in South Australia and stayed on for a few months more to complete other work. She did much of the data gathering and co-authored the SACOSS report, South Australian Consumer Credit Legal Services: A Scoping Study which identified existing services, the need for services and service gaps, and explored possible models for how best to get assistance to people struggling with credit and debt issues. This was a vital part of the campaign which saw the state government provide funding for such services in the state budget.

Hannah was ideally suited to this work as she has a law degree and had been working as a Judge's Associate for two years before coming to SACOSS. And while she was here, we utilised her legal knowledge for other things. She had important input into our submission on national disability legislation and she prepared a briefing for us on the legislation of the national customer framework for energy. Most importantly, she led SACOSS' understanding of the proposed changes to Compulsory Third Party Insurance and the establishment of the Lifetime Support Scheme for those who have chronic disability arising from a motor accident. Her work helped frame the 4 "SACOSS amendments" which were passed into legislation and provide important safeguards for vulnerable South Australians.

On top of those advocacy successes, Hannah was a great presence around the office. She will be missed at SACOSS as she now takes off overseas for a holiday and whatever comes next for her. We wish her all the best in her future ventures and adventures.

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