

HSHPIC Industry Planning Symposium Communiqué

The Social Service Sector of Tomorrow

June 2017

Victoria has a mature and vibrant community and social services sector, with a proud history of supporting people experiencing poverty and disadvantage. However, the sector is entering a time of significant change driven by State and Commonwealth Government reforms, as well as social and economic factors.

It is critical that planning for the industry is undertaken collaboratively to ensure the sector can maximise the opportunity of the reforms, manage the impact of changes and meet increasing demand for services.

Industry Planning Symposium

On 17 March 2017, more than 100 leaders from the community and social services sector attended The Social Service Sector of Tomorrow: HSHPIC Industry Planning Symposium, hosted by the Human Services and Health Partnership Implementation Committee (HSHPIC) at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. The symposium was the first step in the collaborative process of industry planning between government and the sector.

It provided an opportunity to discuss a shared vision and how the government and sector working in partnership, can prepare for the anticipated changes and trends in social services. Participants considered how the future industry might look across five drivers of change:

- workforce
- digital innovation
- flexible funding approaches
- outcomes
- evidence-based approaches.

What is industry planning?

An industry plan articulates a future vision and profile for an industry, and the required steps and necessary preconditions to achieving this vision. Industry planning is part of an industry's natural evolution and life cycle. Every industry needs to adapt and respond to new challenges and opportunities. In recent years many industries have been required to adapt to change, for example the travel industry has totally transformed with the introduction of new and innovative online booking services.

Like other industries, the social service sector is faced with challenges and opportunities for transformation.

Thorough long term industry planning will consider market and demand forecasting, literature, scenario analysis and input from a range of stakeholders, including reflecting on lessons learned over the years across other reforms and from other industries. It will set the vision for a future, more contemporary community services industry and will outline practical measures for achieving this vision.

What is HSHPIC?

The Human Services and Health Partnership Implementation Committee (HSHPIC) is a joint committee of sector and peak body leadership representatives and representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services. It was established in 2004 as a result of the partnership agreement between the then Department of Human Services and the health, housing and community services sector. It is co-chaired by the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) and the department. HSHPIC's role is to promote and facilitate collaboration on policy priorities between the department and the community sector. It also promotes consultation and engagement between the department and the funded community services sector.

HSHPIC Members include representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, Berry Street, Carers Victoria, Centre for Excellence in Child & Family Welfare, Community Housing Federation of Victoria, Council to Homeless Persons, Domestic Violence Victoria, National Disability Services (NDS) Victoria, Psychiatric Disability Services of Victoria (VICSERV), Vicsport, Victorian Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisation (VACCHO), Victorian Alcohol & Drug Association (VAADA), Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS), Victorian Healthcare Association (VHA), and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic).

Industry Planning Symposium Summary

VCOSS CEO, Emma King provided participants with an industry perspective on the challenges to be faced together, including discussion of the relationship between inequality, the economy and the social services sector of tomorrow. The Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos MP, spoke about transitions already underway across the sector, highlighting future priorities and acknowledging the need for government to support the sector through upcoming changes. Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, Kym Peake, discussed the underlying theme across all reforms being a strong and deliberate shift towards outcomes and the role that government can play in supporting the industry to plan for its future.

Keynote Speakers

Keynote 1: Kym Goodes, CEO, Tasmanian Council of Social Service



Kym's presentation provided the context for industry planning in Tasmania and emphasised the need to identify and work together as an industry. Whilst the community sector is the second largest employer behind agriculture in Tasmania, it is often not seen as an employment option or as an industry for economic development. The volatility of funding for the sector has had an impact on people wanting to work in community services. The sector is also experiencing fast and furious reform across every area of human services. However there is little knitting together across the reform agenda. Program and service fragmentation is high and there has been a hollowing out of the public service of policy and program expertise.

To raise the sector's profile, TasCOSS decided it needed to do something differently. A new narrative was needed. TasCOSS partnered with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Saul Eslake in 2015 to develop [The Tasmania Report](#). This articulated the human service needs of Tasmanians, as well as highlighted employment in the community sector as a key area for jobs growth. TasCOSS also produced [The State of Tasmania's Community Sector](#) report, highlighting key data about the sector's potential.

Today, the community sector in Tasmania is seen as a key employer and economic driver. However, there is still need for continued investment to support industry growth. *“Government will need to attend to what infrastructure will be needed for our growth and change, and cease contracting and commissioning models that pit us against each other.”*

Kym highlighted the need to be bold in response to the changes ahead. This year, the twelve peak bodies of Tasmania published a joint State Budget Submission, reflecting a joint approach to sector development. Next steps include the development of a Tasmanian community sector workforce plan (underway), a Blueprint for Human Services in Tasmania (underway) and an overarching Industry Plan (lobbying government for this).

Keynote 2: John Daley, CEO, Grattan Institute



John outlined the structural changes impacting on Victoria and Australia. This included economic growth which has slowed and remarked that the sector ignores economic growth indicators at its peril. Slower economic growth makes government budgeting harder, particularly for the Commonwealth. John noted shifts in the economy with consumption and employment less likely for goods, and more likely for services.

He also noted that Australia is increasing in inequality, although this is not as stark as in the United States. Wealth outcomes are diverging more than income inequality.

Additionally, regional areas have lower incomes and lower growth, as economic growth is concentrating in Melbourne and its centre. Inequality growth is increasing closer to the city and regions are slipping behind because of lower population growth and services concentrating on metropolitan areas. John discussed the shift to user-centred care and emphasised the importance of careful design and regulation.

Key drivers for industry planning

In the afternoon, after hearing from a panel of experts, participants broke into workshops to discuss in more detail the key drivers for industry planning. Below is a summary of the key themes that emerged.

Workforce of the future

This covers all aspects related to the community services workforce such as analysis and planning, skills and qualifications, career and training pathways, and attraction and retention.



Professor David Hayward, Acting Director, [Future Social Service Institute](#), helped to open up conversation around this topic by emphasising that the community sector is the fastest growing service sector and should be recognised as such.

Participants discussed that there is an opportunity and willingness across industry to improve the value, professionalism and marketing of the current workforce and the volunteers who support them. There are clear career pathways in universal health services that are well supported, including facilitating practitioners to go into rural/regional areas post training. Can this be achieved in social services?

There is an opportunity to improve staff retention and create pathways for people outside the sector to transition from other careers or from tertiary education more seamlessly. This requires making the industry more attractive via different levers, e.g. increased support for new graduates, greater recognition of achievements, better remuneration and provision of ongoing professional development opportunities. Current funding arrangements do not include allowances for staff development. This needs to be addressed if workforce value is to be improved into the future and to retain existing expertise.

Technology can play a role in integrating the sector's varied workforces and encouraging collaboration and multidisciplinary service delivery. This doesn't just require updated technology and training but a cultural shift – it may be a big change for some, small for others but one with great benefits for all, especially in harnessing the great contribution of volunteers and unpaid workers.

Top ideas for further exploration:

- Create pathways across the sector, including consideration of training and qualifications for workers to transition from other careers into the community sector.
- Invest in marketing and promoting careers in the sector to the broader community and students.

Digital innovation

Digital technologies can make services more convenient for citizens to use, improve service quality and safety and support more effective service responses. Digital technologies have potential to: make services more convenient for citizens to use, improve service quality and safety and directly support more effective service responses.



Dr Steve Hodgkinson, Chief Information Officer of the Department of Health and Human Services, introduced the topic by speaking about the need to track outcomes, provide information, flexibility and choice in service delivery - leveraging of technology platforms that already exist and applying them in agile ways.

Participants discussed the ways current technology does not support the industry to work together. Interoperable ICT systems will better support clients' journey, privacy and information. This theme cuts across all areas of industry planning and while there are many barriers to change, the industry agrees that it is one that needs to be addressed ongoing. The potential opportunities for the sector as a whole are huge with interoperable ICT systems. These include the ability to predict service needs, to collect client information once, to make informed business/service decisions, operate in a person-centred way, better understand the true cost of service delivery, support a mobile and flexible workforce/volunteers, allow for smaller organisations to have greater visibility/input and improve the industry's ability to measure outcomes.

A key challenge is leveraging ICT in a highly fragmented and competitive sector. Any platform that is shared must be agile enough to change with the industry because in most cases it's not known what capabilities may be needed in the future. Switching the industry's culture to sharing information rather than holding is a shared goal. Overall, ICT should not be seen as an end in itself. It is only part of the solution and an enabler of all the reform priority areas.

Top ideas for further exploration:

- Shift the primary bias from holding information to sharing information through making data held by government and the sector more accessible and easier to analyse.
- Obtain a common understanding of the shared ICT needs of organisations across agencies, the sector and government that enable a more person/client-centred way of working.

Outcomes approaches

A focus on outcomes drives people and the systems they work in to think about their core purpose and how they can achieve it better. An outcomes approach provides information about the impact of collective efforts over time.



In her opening remarks, Kristy Muir, Chief Executive Officer, [Centre for Social Impact](#), described outcomes measurement as essential and being a real catalyst for change in the way funding and programs are provided across the system.

Participants discussed a value for outcomes approaches and that there are many pockets where outcomes measurement is happening across the sector. There is great opportunity for government to support this activity by encouraging joint program/funding applications that reduce competition, integrated measurement systems, sharing information, interoperable IT systems, providing expertise and training and by fostering greater collaboration.

Outcomes-based funding needs to be applied appropriately to avoid unintended/detrimental consequences, such as cherry picking clients. It's important to ensure that any shared outcomes approach does not limit the sector's ability to be innovative, to fail and share these lessons, to hold onto social values (even those with no direct cost return) and to be flexible with clients.

Top ideas for further exploration:

- There's a need to build capacity to work in this way, including across practices, leadership and technology.
- Increased government leadership, including clarity around definitions, release of department's outcomes framework and to co-design a model.
- Agree on a set of foundational outcomes as a baseline for sector-wide measures, e.g. quality of life scale.
- Develop opportunities for the sector to share good practice in outcomes measures that reflect changes in people's lives e.g. innovation hub, so the workforce can learn from each other.

Evidence-based approaches

This involves building an evidence-based service system where data and analytics, research and evaluation are used to inform and guide policy development, funding allocations, program design and implementation, service planning and delivery, and practice.



Professor Sharon Goldfield of the [Murdoch Children's Research Institute](#) provided a thought provoking introduction to this topic, remarking that evidence based approaches should be applied in concert with a range of system, local level and professional views to ensure that not just the best care is provided, but that the care can be really targeted to the most vulnerable. There is an opportunity for the whole sector to collect a few measures that show impact such as the Quality of Life measure

Participants discussed there is an appetite to share and harness existing evidence across the sector, particularly to illustrate the impact of services as a whole. However this is difficult when time and resources are limited. A range of ideas to improve the way the industry collects and uses evidence were tabled, including:

- A common overarching framework that can guide evidence development, dissemination and use.
- A centralised/coordinated approach to collect and share information in real time and mechanisms to share this information.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the system as a whole by looking at evidence at a system level, as well as at program and practice level – this should be fed back to the industry.
- Access to data that can inform practice (in real time), including government to share more of the data they collect.
- There is a role for government to facilitate connections with tertiary institutions aligned with data collection and for government to promote the sector's evidence/learnings/data to the rest of the world, thereby improving its reputation.
- Appropriate governance around evidence/authorising environments across all systems.

Top ideas for further exploration:

- Develop mechanisms for sharing evidence and information, including peer reviewed research and evaluations
- Develop a framework for evaluation in the sector, i.e. to evaluate the cumulative impact of programs / collection of services in a single place, shared evaluation that follows the client or place-based approaches.
- Develop universal practice measures that go across sectors.
- Develop systems for real time evidence gathering and data collection that can be used rapidly, which also includes consumer voice, for continuous quality improvement in the system.

Flexible, person-centred funding

The current way that services are funded makes it difficult for providers to tailor support to people's needs. It encourages fragmentation and prioritises short-term and crisis interventions over improving outcomes for people over the long-term.



Graham Dangerfield, Chief Executive Officer, Bapcare described a funding model that enhances flexibility, choice and control, with funding that is responsive to one-off, episodic and permanent needs, where families and individuals can make choices related to their service provision and support.

Participants discussed the opportunity to transition to a flexible, person-centred funding model based on shared principles, and not just an evidence-based model but one that allows for innovation and trialling/pilots. Is there opportunity to learn from other sectors that have moved to market-based approaches funded by government?

There's a need to identify what skills are required going forward and how to manage the workforce to enable this – capability must be linked to changes around funding models. The sector has a general tendency to be risk averse but change requires risk management leadership. There's a balance to be found between risk, price and demand.

Top ideas for further exploration:

- Reflect on the lessons from the NDIS, both the benefits and unintended consequences of the scheme to guide the system.
- Develop clear definitions for what is meant by flexible, person-centred funding.
- Involve service users in designing any changes to the system and funding approach. Then provide support and information to clients to assist in understanding the reforms.

In addition to the topics above, the discussions at the symposium revealed a broader range of issues that the industry will need to consider as part of a comprehensive futures-focused plan:

- **Client-centred approaches:** Person or client-centred services provide accessible, responsive and flexible services that meet the needs and preferences of service users and their carers in holistic manner. The service user is at the centre of the decision-making process and the service users and their family members are considered partners in decision-making.
- **Place-based approaches:** Place-based approaches are ways of developing and delivering local solutions to local problems. When done well, they bring together community members, community organisations, businesses, governments and public services such as school and health centres, to solve local problems and build on local strengths.
- **Organisational and industry readiness:** The community services sector will be one of the fastest growing and most important to the Victorian economy in coming years. Industry readiness refers to service providers' business and operational models and how they will transition and manage new systems and practices required to grow sustainably, in a reform environment.

- **Regulation changes:** Any regulatory changes brought about by reform, both at the State and Commonwealth level, may require modifications to systems, processes or approaches, or the introduction of new practices. They may also require changes targeted at the workforce (such as minimum or mandatory qualifications) or the way data and information is collected from community sector organisations.
- **Governance and leadership:** This is important in ensuring a strong and inclusive relationship across the sector, wider industry and government. Effective organisation governance is vital for achieving the overall vision for industry and maintaining a sustainable and strong industry.

HSHPIC, in partnership with the broader sector, will continue to explore in more detail all of these key drivers for change to guide the industry's planning over the coming months.

Next steps

Building on the discussions at the symposium, further exploration of the priority areas identified for industry planning will occur over the next twelve months including via:

- an industry planning discussion paper
- the establishment of an industry planning governance group
- consultations in regional/rural and metropolitan areas, and
- workshop-style dialogues with existing sector partnerships and forums,
- followed by the development of a strategic action plan.

Thank you again for your continuous input.

If you would like further information or have any questions relating to this work, please email commsecplanning@vcoss.org.au

