Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Innovations Fund

home to work

An Evaluation

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ANZSOG Institute for Governance

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACTCIB</td>
<td>ACT Community Inclusion Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFP</td>
<td>Australian Federal Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATSI</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANZSIG</td>
<td>Australia-New Zealand School of Government’s Institute for Governance</td>
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<td>ASIB</td>
<td>Australian Social Inclusion Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse individuals</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>Common Assessment Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
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<td>H2W</td>
<td>Home to Work project</td>
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<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Single parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YP</td>
<td>Young person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YSP</td>
<td>Young single parent</td>
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The easy evaluations are usually the least rewarding not least because the findings tend to be a rehearsal of predictable standards. So when I say that this evaluation has been a difficult task from start to finish I mean it in a positive way. Projects of this type are messy and as one protagonist put it to me ‘to do this type of work well you have to like the mess’! We would therefore like to express our gratitude to those collaborators who helped us work through the mess. Firstly, to Clare Barbato whose passion for social equality got this project going in the first place. Secondly, to Karolina Szukalska who was the perfect Project Co-ordinator. Thirdly, to two stunning brokers – David Worner and Sally Cooper – whose professionalism was inspiring.

Special thanks must also be conveyed to members of the Governance Group. I was struck by both their generosity in terms of the sharing of information and their passion for confronting critical issues in social inclusion. As always, however, the interpretation of data in the analysis which follows remains the sole responsibility of the ANZSOG Institute for Governance.

In addition, I would like to thank Richard Reid, Paul Porteous, Bill Burmester, Lorna Evans and Hannah Wrighton for their telling contributions to the completion of this report. Most importantly, however, I would like to thank ‘Home to Work’ participants. May you all prosper and live happy and rewarding lives.

Mark Evans

29 February 2012
Executive Summary

(1) Context
In 2012, there remains a small group of citizens, spread across Canberra, who are living deeply challenging lives. These citizens and their dependents share our communities, our hopes and our own daily interactions with society. Yet many are trapped in a spiral of indebtedness, drug dependency, poor mental health and crime. Others are experiencing other forms of exclusion due to limited language capabilities, the lack of basic education or the absence of social support networks. While others, are recovering from long-term trauma due to child abuse, neglect or domestic violence. All are rebounding between service interventions without ever getting the coordinated help they need. The decline in social capital – the networks of trust, mutual assistance and reciprocity that help connect us as human beings – impacts most dramatically on this group of citizens – people who suffer from multiple exclusions. An increasing number of Canberrans are in Robert Putnam’s (2002) terms ‘bowling alone’ and it is now recognized both nationally and internationally that the fundamental role of progressive social policy is to reconnect these citizens to civil society through the creation of new support networks to allow them to live full and rewarding lives.

(2) Purpose
The ‘Home to Work’ project attempts to provide a bridge between citizens experiencing multiple exclusions and their community. Hence, the fundamental aim of this report is to provide a developmental evaluation of the progress that the ‘Home to Work’ pilot project has made in realising this objective, with the aim of enhancing the quality of project management, delivery and outcomes for long-term job seekers in Canberra.

This executive summary is organised around five sets of findings that have emerged from the research process and are presented in response to five questions: (1) what did we already know about better international practice in combating social exclusion through place-based delivery? (2) What outcomes has the ‘Home to Work’ pilot project achieved? (3) What delivery dilemmas need to be mitigated to enhance project outcomes? (4) How can they be mitigated?
And (5), how has the project performed when benchmarked against international better practice?

(3) **What did we already know about better international practice in combating social exclusion through place-based delivery?**

The assumptions outlined below are drawn from a broad range of sources (see Appendix 1) reflecting the dominance of the ‘Housing First’ (see Gordon, 2010) approach deployed in urban housing in Australia and the United States and social inclusion/exclusion approaches in the UK. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report *Tackling homelessness and exclusion: understanding complex lives*, which was published earlier this year is particularly instructive on the potential role of public housing in combating social exclusion (see Appendix 2). The ‘Housing First’ approach is presently used in Melbourne and Adelaide and constitutes a departure from the traditional pathways approach typically used in Australia (see Appendix 3 for first principles). We also reflect on the ACT government’s (ACT CMD, 2009) own research in this area which was commissioned by the ACT’s Community Inclusion Board (ACID).

1. The most socially excluded groups are the hardest to reach and the least able to engage effectively with services (ACID, UK, US).
2. Place based programs only work well if they have full strategic and political support (ACID, UK, US).
3. Place based programs work well because they simplify the complexities associated with joining-up several services (systems change) and the participants’ interaction with those services (system navigation) (ACID, UK, US).
4. Place based programs work well if they are flexible to the needs and lives of the participants and proceeds from a philosophy of co-design with genuine choice. Participants respond well to increased choice and responsibility (UK, US).
5. Place based programs offer the opportunity for early intervention (UK, US).
6. Place based programs work well if they are sensitive to the need to help participants to negotiate difficult transition points in their lives (UK, US).
7. Place based programs work well if they are personalized through a key worker model (ACID, UK, US).
8. The relationship between the key worker and the participant is crucial to achieving progressive outcomes (the key worker model is sometimes referred to as the lead provider model) (ACID, UK, US).
9. The quality of the brokerage is crucial to achieving progressive outcomes (ACID, UK, US).
10. The role of the key worker in raising the confidence and self-esteem of the participant is crucial to achieving progressive outcomes (UK, US).
11. Program success can only be comprehensively measured through the lens of the individual journeys of the participants as they tend to be navigating multiple needs and exclusions (UK, US).
12. Place based programs lend themselves to individual budgets (UK, US).
13. Place-based service delivery will only work well if there is a corresponding cultural shift across other local services and agencies (a systems or holistic approach) (ACID, UK, US).
14. Place matters in terms of the availability of ‘key workers’ and the provision of ‘settled accommodation’ (UK, US).
15. Participants must opt in for support and thereafter have rights and obligations (mutual obligation) (UK, US).

It is noteworthy that these assumptions could be integrated into a social contract model of public housing in which entitlements to services are afforded on the basis of the mutual obligation to participate.

(4) What outcomes has the ‘Home to Work’ pilot project achieved?

This evaluation recognized the importance of focusing on both project process and outcomes. Qualitative data has been generated to provide a strong understanding of the quality of the process of design and delivery and both qualitative and quantitative data is presented to provide an assessment of the extent to which the project achieved intended outcomes for individual participants.

**Process outcomes for project partners – delivering genuine collaborative governance**

So what benefits can be attributed to the establishment of ‘Home to Work’? Our findings demonstrate that the fundamental benefit of the project to most project partners lies in the process of lesson-drawing across the partnership on the merits and demerits of place based service delivery – learning through doing and professional reflection. ’Home to Work’ can be understood as a process of learning in which the means (place based service delivery through the key worker model) to an end (better employment outcomes) is subject to careful deliberation by informed and reflexive practitioners. In addition to the process of inter-organisational learning, the project also benefited from resource and information sharing and the evaluation process itself. The ‘Home to Work’ project has provided a strong foundation to future joint initiatives in the ACT to combat social exclusion.

**Process outcomes for participants – high quality place-based delivery**

Participant perceptions of the value of the project can be an important indicator of success. All participants responded positively to participating in a project like this again and would recommend it to friends and family. The majority of participants reported that the project was ‘too short’ with about a third reporting it ‘about right’. No one felt it was ‘too long’, indicating that participants appreciated the continuing support throughout the process, in many cases even after they had secured employment. The majority of participants were happy with the support they received and this view was common across subgroups with only two participants rating it below 5 out of 10. All participants would participate again and recommend ‘Home to Work’ to family and friends. Similarly, a general improvement of views on government and community services resulted, with only one participant reporting a deterioration of their view of these services. As a learning opportunity, most participants reported an improvement in their
understanding of the services available to them indicating that the project can have longer term impact on the ability of participants to access future services.

**Project outcomes for participants – delivering life-changing outcomes**

Seventy five per cent of participants reported having their expectations fulfilled. Of the 25% who felt they did not get what they expected, their reasons related to very specific needs which were not met e.g. ‘Bobcat training’, ‘IT training’, ‘work experience’, ‘childcare’, or ‘no job’. We also report that our sample of ‘Home to Work’ participants were overwhelmingly positive in terms of the skills training, mentoring and work experience they received. Significant outcomes were also reported in education, childcare, stable housing and permanent work. In short, the data shows that while key aspirations around skill training and work were met, the group got a lot more from the project than they were initially expecting. This helps to explain the deeper level of engagement participants reported as the project proceeded and new possibilities emerged. They expanded their personal problem solving toolkit and looking beyond simply securing employment to other aspects of improving their lives with the support of key workers and agencies.

The final pilot project outcomes demonstrate significant gains for project participants in employment (47 out of 81 participants), work experience (2), education (4) and training (4).

(5) **What delivery dilemmas need to be mitigated to enhance project outcomes?**

The key delivery dilemmas for the ‘Home to Work’ project can be organised around conceptual (*how the project is understood by participants, brokers and stakeholders*), institutional (*project design and resources*) and environmental constraints and triggers. It is observed that these sets of factors can constrain or facilitate progressive outcomes; interact in often unintended ways; and, need to be carefully managed (see Figure 1).

(6) **How can they be mitigated?**

The issues requiring attention can be organised around refinements to the delivery system, co-design issues and issues relating to the measurement of success.

**Improvements to the delivery system**

This would require:

- the development of a formal *but sensitive* social contract with the participants;
- the development of a personalised communication strategy for individual participants to ensure effective flow of information;
- the development of effective support systems for the key worker (e.g. back office support, integrated information management system, succession planning);
- the creation of a service information repository;
- the integration of key governance partners (e.g. JSAs, advocacy groups, volunteer organisations and employers) into the delivery system;
Figure 1. Critical implementation dilemmas and their interaction

Conceptual constraints and triggers
1. Brokers
2. Participants
3. Degree of behavioural change required

Institutional constraints and triggers

Project design
1. Clear and consistent objectives
2. Incorporation of adequate causal theory of change
3. Effective coordination of brokers
4. Clear roles for implementing agencies
5. Clear decision rules for implementing agencies
6. Effective project instruments [skills mapping tool, participant communication strategy]

Resources
6. Adequate allocation of financial resources
7. Effective base-line data and access to knowledge
8. Recruitment of project officers with adequate skills/training
9. Effective and sensitive performance measurement
10. Place
11. Effective case management and support
12. Formal access by participants
13. Communication of success

Environmental constraints and triggers affecting implementation
1. Socio-economic conditions and technology
2. Public support
3. Attitudes and resources of constituency groups
4. Support from politicians
5. Commitment and leadership skills of implementing officials
6. Alignment with Commonwealth and State agendas
7. Media perceptions

The Implementation Process
Project outputs of implementing agencies → Compliance with project outputs by target groups → Actual impacts of project outputs → Perceived impacts of project outputs → Major revision in project

Key
Green = trigger  Amber = as yet no gravity of evidence  Red = potential constraint
• the integration of key governance partners into governance arrangements; and,
• ‘Home to Work’ provides an important starting point to greater cross agency collaboration in relation to resources, training and information sharing and the establishment of a genuine community of practice.

However, there are some important tasks ahead for this community of practice:

• the community of practice in general and the ACT government in particular must improve its data on services delivered into areas with pockets of deprivation to identify inefficiencies and where shared services are possible.
• Greater focus must be paid to how place-based service delivery can be used as a vehicle for early intervention and transition management.
• Service provision must become more personal to get the outcomes and local service providers are best placed to build longstanding, trusting relationships with participants.
• ACT Housing has proved extremely adept in providing on-site support using assertive engagement methods (e.g. intensive case management; assertive engagement; personal support with tasks of everyday living; and linking to other specialist services) but acceptance of support through a social contract should be mandatory but sensitively negotiated.
• Quality, affordable (based on a maximum of 30% of income), secure, long term housing which is connected to the community is critical to ensure that no disincentives to remain in the labour market occur.

**Improvements in co-design**

These would include:

• improved personal data to allow for more sophisticated skills mapping;
• clearer articulation to participants of project benefits;
• greater use of co-design methods; and,
• careful management of the case work pressure points including early intervention and transition preparedness.

**Improvements in the measurement of success**

This would involve the development of a measurement tool for evaluating progress for participants experiencing multiple needs and exclusions incorporating a personal development record, journey map and milestones.

We would also recommend that the ACT government develops a social return on investment model for determining the effectiveness of interventions such as ‘Home to Work’ and the longer term costs to economy and society of sticking with traditional service models. For example, we know that effective drug treatment and homelessness services reduce public spending in the medium term. Drug users cost government more than $20,000 per year but every $2 spent on
drug treatment saves a minimum of $19 in associated health and crime costs (Godfrey et al., 2004). Many participants suffering from multiple exclusions draw heavily on the repetitive use of public services such as expensive emergency interventions. In the UK’s *Making Every Adult Matter* report in 2009 it was calculated that one offender alone cost $304,000 in policing, court and prison costs, $80,000 in hospital and drug treatment, $360,000 in accommodation and support and $75,000 on outreach support (2009, p. 22).

Our knowledge of the cost effectiveness of the ‘Home to Work’ project is by no means exhaustive as this was not part of our remit. However, as the Project Coordinator notes:

Looking at the budget for the pilot, the Broker model would need to remain in terms of the costs associated with workers. The budget itself is quite lean and if you want to maintain the calibre of brokers then you really need to keep it at the $120 000 mark per broker for the two years. Also, the agency fee has to remain, as the organising agency will still have management costs.

However, if you consider what was included in the entire budget, such as the evaluation and the set up phase of the Project – these costs would not be needed if you were to continue with a project such as this, especially if it was in the form of recurrent funding.

Taking these items of expenditure out, the cost of the Project reduces to approximately $550,000 over 2 years. In terms of other projects/programs that run in the ACT with significantly lesser output/outcome requirements, the cost effectiveness of this project is quite evident.

Other considerations that we believe need to be factored in are the numerous savings in other areas such as the reduction in Centrelink benefit claims and the roll-on benefit to the broader community in terms of participant engagement and influence.

In sum, the ‘Home to Work’ project delivers significant outcomes and is cost effective.

**Improvements in monitoring and evaluation**

A broad range of enhancements can be made here including: the development of a communication strategy for communicating project success stories; the integration of monitoring and evaluation imperatives into the project workplan; and, the need for a postcode service audit to see what money is being spent and what efficiencies could be made to source additional project funding.

It is also observed that this type of project would benefit more from co-design thinking than formal evaluation. Design thinking is about understanding the lives of others. It involves mapping personal stories (journey maps) about citizen experiences of public services. It has three purposes – to explore, design and evaluate. It is based on the observation that citizens never experience the delivery system as a whole; just pathways through the system. For example, we would argue that it is possible to identify a set number of pathways through a project such as ‘Home to Work’. As the role of the brokers is to make the journey a positive one it makes sense to work with citizens who exemplify these different journeys with the aim of enriching their experiences. This requires creating an environment that allows citizens to tell their own stories and not making assumptions about their preferences. It doesn’t require big numbers unlike a statistically significant survey but it does require spending quality time with a
small number of participants, mapping their journeys, identifying obstacles and developing mitigating strategies.

(7) How has the project performed when benchmarked against international better practice?

At the outset we identified 16 principles of design underpinning international better practice in combating social exclusion through place-based service delivery to provide a benchmark for assessing ‘Home to Work’ project delivery and outcomes. Our findings demonstrate the following assumptions about working with socially excluded groups in the ACT:

1. The claim that the most socially excluded groups are the hardest to reach and the least able to engage effectively with services is problematic; this depends on the design of the project and the quality of engagement (contrary to the ACID, UK and the US).
2. The project works well because it has full strategic and political support and a high quality governance group.
3. The project works well because it simplifies the complexities associated with joining-up several services (systems change) and the participants’ interaction with those services (system navigation).
4. The project works well because it is flexible to the needs and lives of the participants and proceeds from a philosophy of co-design with genuine choice. Participants respond well to increased choice and responsibility.
5. The project works well because it helps participants to negotiate difficult transition points in their lives.
6. The project works well because of the constructive relationship between the key worker and the participant.
7. The quality of the brokerage is crucial to achieving progressive outcomes.
8. Raised self-esteem and confidence of the participant is crucial to achieving progressive outcomes.
9. Project success can only be comprehensively measured through the lens of the individual journeys of the participants as they are all navigating multiple needs and exclusions. All H2W participants are navigating at least four of the following forms of exclusion:
   Affordable childcare
   Child abuse
   Criminal record
   Debt
   Domestic Violence
   Economic dependency
   Family breakdown
   Language problems
   Mental illness
   Physical health problems
   Limited educational qualifications
   Race
   Personal Security
   Police Harassment
Stable housing
Substance abuse
Support networks (absence of)
Limited access to transport
Limited work experience/skills

10. The project lends itself to early intervention logic, personalisation and, in the longer term, to the crafting of individual budgets; all of which make for better outcomes.
11. The project works well because the three brokers have negotiated a corresponding cultural shift (a systems or holistic approach) in working norms and values, however, this has not occurred with the job networks. Hence, asymmetries in working norms and values co-exist in the community of practice.
12. Place matters in terms of the availability of ‘key workers’, ‘place based brokers’ and the provision of ‘settled accommodation’.
13. The importance of participants opting in for support helps to distil the notion of rights and obligations (mutual obligation) and relationship building with the key worker.
14. In the main participants share a strong neighbourhood identity but are not distrustful of government (contrary to the ACID, UK and the US).

(8) Parting shot – capturing the political imagination

In keeping with better place-based practice (CMD, 2009), the ‘Home to Work’ pilot project has benefited from: strong, strategic support; effective community and participant engagement; key worker, place manager or single entry systems; and flexible tailored services and funding structures. It has been able to circumvent traditional problems associated with place-based practices such as: reconciling differences in service culture and values; overcoming entrenched ways of working; and, problems with achieving positive outcomes for all target groups. The project has been less successful in realising its aspiration for a co-design approach although co-designed outputs did increase as the project progressed. Most significantly, however, it has delivered life changing outcomes for ACT citizens in employment (47 out of 81 participants), work experience (2), education (4) and training (4) through a cost-effective, local and personal project. In short, the ‘Home to Work’ project possesses most of the ingredients of international better practice in place-based service delivery.