

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Four waves of research over a 15 year period (1999 – 2014) have served to confirm the enduring cumulative social disadvantage of a relatively small number of localities across Australia. The evidence for this conclusion has withstood challenges arising from differences in the range of jurisdictions involved, some variations over time in the set of disadvantage indicators used, and variations in the scale of information made available by the data generating agencies upon whom the project has depended. The conclusion to be drawn from the series of studies is clear. As long as research focuses on indicators of disadvantage with an established research provenance, an underlying commonality is manifested in the:

- *disadvantage profiles of localities* that rank highly across multiple indicators of disadvantage;
- *inter-connecting or correlative variables* that play a significant role in constituting web-like, localised systems of disadvantage; and
- *rank positions of localities* when account is taken of their relative position on a complete set of disadvantage indicators.

From simple counts to more sophisticated statistical procedures like *principal components analysis*, or *average rank*, tilting the perspective now one way, and then another, the signposts maintain a common direction. After allowing for the introduction of new counting areas, the same localities quite consistently emerge as being most vulnerable to disadvantage; the same disadvantageous attributes generally characterise the areas in question, and the dominant characteristics also figure prominently among the highly inter-correlating indicators.

This symmetrical pattern embracing high rankings on particular indicators, prominent characteristics and associated correlative variables, and overall rankings when all indicators are taken into account, is illustrated across the 15 years of the entire project. With regard to the 2014 results, the findings for Victoria serve to remind us of the convergent evidence. Just under half of the state's 40 highest ranking postcodes were similarly placed – that is, amongst the highest ranking 40 places – in 2007. When modifications to the indicator set and other procedural changes noted

in Chapter 4 were taken into account, 25 of the 2014 'top 40' locations coincided with their 2007 counterparts. Consistencies within the most extreme top 12 rank positions were striking: in 1999 eight of the 12 names in the top two bands were the same as for 2014; the same was true midway through this period (2007). A similar set of results occurred with New South Wales. Particularly telling was the finding that 15 years ago nine of the 12 names in the top two bands were the same as in the present listing. In South Australia, all of the SLAs identified by the principal components analysis (PCA) as being in the two most disadvantaged bands – top 12 rank positions – overlapped with the top 10% of places based on extreme rankings on the separate indicators. Furthermore, there were eight SLAs in the first two bands of the current PCA findings for South Australia that matched the results in 2007; all eight were included among the 12 'most' or 'next most' disadvantaged in 2007. These results are another instalment in the unfolding story of the consistency of extreme disadvantage rankings of localities across Australia's states and territories.

The cohesive structure of disadvantage that has persisted in a comparatively small number of localities over the life of four studies, constitutes fertile ground for the development of an attitude of resignation to seemingly insurmountable deprivations. Although the 2014 study has focused on the structure of localised disadvantage rather than associated attitudes, the findings of other researches complement our findings. Rotter's (1966) concept of the locus of control is highly pertinent because the notion of 'external control' captures people's inclination to perceive their life as being shaped by chance, fate or complex forces beyond

their influence. An alternative disposition is to believe that one's own behaviour and characteristics influence the course of events ('internal control').

A study undertaken as part of the Australian Commission of Inquiry into Poverty in the 1970s, utilised social indicators of a similar general character to those employed in the present study. Residents of localities within the city of Newcastle (NSW) identified as cumulatively disadvantaged, were significantly more likely to score at the 'external' end of the locus of control scale than residents of other areas. This difference in orientation was associated with differences in attitudes towards aspects of daily living bearing on life opportunities – 'externals' placed less emphasis upon the cultivation of good health, they less frequently sought redress of perceived shortcomings in services they received, were less inclined to avail themselves of child guidance services, and anticipated a shorter duration of their children's education (Vinson, Homel and Bonney, 1976).

Subsequent studies tell a similar story (Avison and Seabrook, 2012; Harding, McNamara, Tanton, Daly and Yap, 2006; Bauman, Silver and Stein, 2006). That being the case, it would appear rather short-sighted to place faith in a single means – like employment training and placement – to overcome severe localised disadvantage. To reduce the amelioration of cumulative localised disadvantage to additional inputs of officially favoured services and facilities, is of limited value. *Dropping off the Edge* (2007) and other intra-governmental studies to which it gave rise, led to what were considered *communal* initiatives.* There was, however, a confusion of community strengthening with localised focus – a variation on the *old wine in*

* Via the then extant Social Inclusion Board.

new bottles proverb, because the new packaging disguised a decentralised serving of old fare. Two of us recently described the process involved in the following terms:

Notwithstanding the frequency with which terms like *community strengthening*, *community resilience* and *community capacity-building* are invoked today, (these descriptions) simply camouflage the simple transposition of more traditional family and individual focused endeavours and services to a new symbolic stage called 'community'.²³

Such conceptual confusion is well illustrated by a Commonwealth Government scheme of recent years, the "Family Centred Employment Project (FCEP)". Involved was the translation of a declared community strengthening program into a series of potentially useful but individual and family level measures. Intended as a response to marked locational concentrations of social disadvantage, the managing government authority described the FCEP as an "innovative approach to developing, delivering and documenting effective approaches that respond to the employment, education and social needs of jobless families in three communities." The intended range of services related to issues as diverse as transport, mental health, self-confidence, skills, child care and family relationships. The *communal dimension* of the project simply resided in the requirement that each of the FCEP Providers should take into account the characteristics of the local community and the existing services within these communities (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2012-13).

Decidedly absent from the FCEP and many other schemes undertaken in the name of community strengthening has been a focus on community, *qua community*. The latter is achieved when it is conceived of as an entity whose core problem-solving and effort-sustaining capacities can be developed in their own right, in addition to the encouragement of individual and familial initiatives and external investments. There is a well-documented history of how the benefits of 'aid', disconnected from the strengthening of specifiable community capacities, generally tapers and disappears once the external inputs cease. As to the nature of the crucial dimensions of community functioning, we believe that they can be derived from a combination of sociological theory, the findings of experimental research and decades of community field practice. This is not the place for a detailed exposition but our own scheme revolves around four key dimensions. The first two focus on task management, the remaining two are mainly concerned with the socio-emotional operation of the community:²⁴

- *Substance and style of decision-making*: with an emphasis upon open arrangements for generating an action agenda; serious efforts being made to elicit and give serious consideration to opinions across sub-groups, and with leaders guiding the community in developing and using a vision for its future;
- *Resource generation and allocation*: marshalling resources to align with and support goals that have been determined; capitalising on intra-community 'bonding' and 'bridging' ties to generate additional resources

²³ Vinson, T., Rawsthorne, M., (2013) *Lifting Our Gaze. The Community Appraisal and Strengthening Framework*, Champaign, Illinois, Common Ground, p. 27

²⁴ For a detailed discussion see Vinson and Rawsthorne (2013) pp.52-57

and cultivating external connections to lever additional resources; and brokering partnerships aligned with community goals;

- *Integration of people, groups and community organisations*: fostering a sentiment of attachment to the local area; welcoming cultural diversity, accommodating differences and striving to ensure the inclusion of all groups in decision-making; celebrating and symbolising unity; and
- *Maintaining direction, energy and motivation*: the well-functioning community, without denying people's entitlement to self-expression and differences of opinion, encourages the preservation of that degree of order needed for goal identification and achievement; it supports people's willingness to intervene in promoting the sound development of children and young people. It provides opportunities for 'bleeding off' tension and containing disruptive rivalries.

To speak of community strengthening is not to deny the continuing importance of external investment in markedly disadvantaged localities. There have been occasions on which the help proffered has been rather more symbolic than practical, or in the nature of an attempted short-cut 'solution' by authorities. The previously mentioned FCEP project, with its emphasis upon skill acquisition and employment, cannot be criticised on those grounds, but how was it linked to an appraisal of the functional strengths and limitations of the host – choice of term intentional – community? How was its intended operation integrated with the

strengthening of community capacities that can ensure the enduring successful functioning of a community?

The functional opposite of collective resignation is a communal state of *collective efficacy*. This is a notion associated particularly with Sampson and Associates investigations of delinquency (1989; 1997; 2002), but it has its counterpart in a number of fields of research. For example, community-level conditions like cohesion, trust and willingness to work for community goals, are associated with social support that enhances well-being and health (Uchino, 2004). In the field of delinquency studies, Sampson and Groves (1989) found that aspects of social organisation, including high levels of local participation in organisations, the exercise of informal social control, the ability and willingness of residents to guide the behaviour of others towards pro-social norms, mutual support for children, and the density of local friendship networks, reduced levels of crime. Sampson and colleagues have been led to the conclusion that *community level* structures and processes are among the most salient constraints on criminal behaviour. In a summary statement that has close links to the task and socio-emotional dimensions of sound community functioning, outlined earlier in this concluding chapter, Sampson and Groves comment:

... "Socially cohesive neighbourhoods will prove the most fertile contexts for the realisation of informal social control. In sum, it is the linkage of mutual trust and the willingness to intervene for the common good that defines the neighbourhood context of collective efficacy".²⁵

²⁵ Sampson, R., Groves, W., (1989) "Community structure and crime: Testing social disorganisation theory," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 94, 775-802

Of course, it may take an extended period to loosen contrary local practices, and to encourage and gradually build collective efficacy. Largely because of their fuzzy conception of the nature and level of the challenge, Australian authorities have impatiently considered just a few years of community work to be necessary to accomplish change. Then, according to this view, it is time to “roll out” the scheme to benefit other localities. What is needed is careful investigation of the changes wrought at the community level by the various projects currently underway. We can acknowledge some sensitive, skilled community projects across Australia, however, in our present state of knowledge, it is doubtful whether a single community, marked by extreme cumulative disadvantage, has been ‘turned around’ in the sense of experiencing a sustainable and generalised improvement in life opportunities.

It is a matter of fundamental morality that as a nation we are obliged to find an answer to this question. The alternative is to continue to turn away and allow our institutions and charity queues for the unemployed and homeless to be filled to over-flowing by successive generations of the time honoured ‘top 40’ sites, presented in Chapters 3-10 of the present report. Firm political and administrative decisions are required to stay the distance with a manageable number of highly disadvantaged communities in order to ‘turn around’ the life prospects of those who live in them. That objective calls for more than an expression of concern and brief refurbishment. The cycle of extreme disadvantage needs to be tackled at the community level, employing strategies that cultivate a willingness to work for the benefit of the community, developing cohesion and mutual trust – an authentic

effort to strengthen community in terms of key functions, such as those previously outlined, and to consolidate collective efficacy.

Of course, it would be equally foolish and morally unacceptable to contemplate local area solutions to all socially problematic situations. National, state and local government policies and practices have an obvious bearing upon individual and family wellbeing. But here we are discussing localities whose degree and duration of deprivation, and the inter-locking nature of the social impediments experienced, necessitates something more. The additional costs entailed need to be weighed against the bill incurred by present arrangements that often amount to cleaning up the aftermath of neglect, rather than introducing positive measures. For example, when we consider the rate of occurrence of the problems represented by our indicators within the most disadvantaged 3% of localities in each jurisdiction, and compare that rate with the one prevailing in the remaining 97%, the differences can be compellingly stark. Note that we confine the comparisons to those indicators that lend themselves to this analysis.

Perhaps the very stability of the distribution of disadvantage throughout Australia may tempt some to question whether this is an appropriate topic for academic exploration but a fact of life that is to be expected and lived with. Some work undertaken following the publication of *Dropping off the Edge* in 2007 indicated that the point of cleavage separating the most disadvantaged Australian communities from the remainder is at the 3% / 97% level. That split within the counting units of each Australian jurisdiction reveals differences that are far from being of merely academic significance.

The data gathered on this occasion has facilitated a more complete and accurate assessment of the nature and scale of the distinction in life circumstances prevailing within the 3% most disadvantaged communities. That assessment has been in terms of the available indicators which lend themselves to the analysis (see below) and, of necessity, has been conducted

within each jurisdiction. Taking Victoria as a first example, based upon the comparative proportions of those eligible by age or circumstance (for example, participation in the workforce or children under 15 years) within the two aggregated 3% and 97% locational categories, the following ratios apply as shown in Table 11-1.

Table 11-1: Ratio of 3% most disadvantaged localities and remainder of localities in Victoria

| Victoria | Proportion top 3% | Proportion 97% (the rest) | Ratio 97% to 3% |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Overall low level of education | 9.7 | 3.6 | 2.7 |
| Absence of post school qualifications | 54.6 | 41.0 | 1.3 |
| Unskilled workers | 24.0 | 15.6 | 1.5 |
| Young adults not engaged | 11.8 | 5.5 | 2.2 |
| Disability support | 13.0 | 5.5 | 2.4 |
| Long term unemployed | 5.5 | 1.9 | 2.9 |
| Rent assistance | 10.9 | 6.2 | 1.8 |
| Unemployed | 8.0 | 3.2 | 2.5 |
| Child maltreatment | 5.4 | 1.8 | 3.1 |
| Criminal convictions | 12.9 | 6.6 | 2.0 |
| Juvenile convictions | 1.2 | 0.4 | 3.4 |
| Domestic violence | 6.2 | 2.4 | 2.6 |
| Prison admissions | 1.4 | 0.5 | 2.8 |
| Psychiatric admissions | 1.5 | 0.9 | 1.8 |

Normally we would regard a doubling of the rate of an occurrence as being a matter of note. That is what we find to be the case with criminal convictions in Victoria and, indeed, in only four instances was the ratio less than 2.0. However, in the case of juvenile offending, in a State with an acknowledged overall modest rate, the ratio favouring the general community was almost three-and-a-half times less than the 3% group. The ratio of the rates of child maltreatment were of a similar order and the comparable measures

of long-term unemployment, prison admissions and limited overall education were not far behind.

These differences were by no means extreme in comparison with some of the other jurisdictions. For example, in Western Australia, the proportion of prison admissions was eight times greater in the top 3% localities, and approximately 5-6 times higher with respect to both unemployment indicators, 'Young people not engaged' and low overall level of education.

Table 11-2: Ratio of 3% and 97% in Western Australia

| Western Australia | Proportion top 3% | Proportion 97% (the rest) | Ratio 97% to 3% |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Overall low level of education | 10.6 | 2.2 | 4.8 |
| Absence of post school qualifications | 49.5 | 41.8 | 1.2 |
| Unskilled workers | 24.0 | 15.5 | 1.5 |
| Young people not engaged | 33.8 | 6.8 | 5.0 |
| Disability support | 14.4 | 4.4 | 3.3 |
| Long term unemployed | 12.0 | 2.0 | 6.0 |
| Rent assistance | 0.9 | 5.7 | 0.2 |
| Unemployed | 20.3 | 3.5 | 5.8 |
| Child maltreatment | 3.9 | 1.5 | 2.6 |
| Prison admissions | 5.8 | 0.7 | 8.1 |
| Psychiatric admissions | 3.0 | 1.4 | 2.1 |

Having illustrated our approach with the two foregoing examples, rather than proceed individually with each of the remaining four states it serves our purpose to summarise their ratios as shown in Table 11.3.

Table 11-3: Ratio of 3% and 97% in various States

| Remaining four States | Ratio 97% to 3% NSW | Ratio 97% to 3% SA | Ratio 97% to 3% TAS | Ratio 97% to 3% QLD |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Overall low level of education | 2.9 | 5.3 | 1.4 | 4.1 |
| Absence of post school qualifications | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.2 | 1.5 |
| Unskilled workers | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.0 |
| Young adults not engaged | 2.2 | 5.2 | 2.0 | 4.7 |
| Disability support | 2.0 | 2.3 | 1.5 | 2.4 |
| Long term unemployed | 3.3 | 5.1 | 1.4 | 2.3 |
| Rent assistance | 1.7 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 1.1 |
| Unemployed | 2.9 | 5.2 | 1.3 | 1.7 |
| Child maltreatment | --- | --- | --- | 4.2 |
| Criminal convictions | 2.3 | 4.1 | 1.5 | 8.5 |
| Juvenile convictions | 2.3 | 2.4 | 1.8 | 6.1 |
| Domestic violence | 2.8 | --- | 2.3 | 4.2 |
| Prison admissions | 3.6 | 10.0 | 1.6 | 5.2 |
| Psychiatric admissions | 1.8 | 3.5 | 1.1 | --- |

The above information actually offers some reassurance to governments and finance controllers: to concentrate on the most cumulatively disadvantaged localities throughout Australia is not to 'Open Pandora's box.' What we recommend (below) is a firm political and administrative commitment to staying the distance with a manageable number of highly disadvantaged communities. There are exemplars of Australian communities sustaining a long-term commitment to community strengthening guided by the type of principles outlined here, such as the Local Government led initiatives undertaken in Mildura in Victoria, and community led, City Government supported initiatives in Glebe (Sydney). The fundamental aim of these projects is to 'turn around' the life

prospects of residents, while reducing the ultimate social costs otherwise incurred by neglect of fundamental communal needs.

While development processes are at the heart of community strengthening, the profiles of disadvantaged areas across Australian jurisdictions show that the venture needs to have at its disposal the wherewithal to achieve practical goals. For example, the unavailability of work opportunities and occupational skills have featured in our results, often in association with limited education and training, criminal convictions and prison admissions. Undoubtedly part of an effective community level response to lack of engagement in paid work is the creative local generation of work

opportunities across the board – within extra-community corporations, creative locality-based enterprises to serve local markets, and ‘start up’ individual and small group enterprises. Whatever other measures are necessary to combat the geographic concentration of the problems highlighted throughout our report, it is difficult to deny the centrality of limited education and training and their impact on the acquisition of economic and life skills, in the making and sustaining of localised disadvantage in Australia. Yet, as the uplifting example of the *School as Community Centre* cited in Chapter 3 illustrates, the ways in which developments are decided upon and fashioned are as important as the measures themselves if community strengthening is to be achieved.

The fundamental principle is this: in order for services and infrastructural interventions to be effective in the long run, they must not only be useful in their own right but simultaneously serve the end of strengthening the overall community. More than gaining the participation of residents is involved in fulfilling this principle (although that achievement is of fundamental importance). To the best of our knowledge there have been few ‘before and after’ evaluations of community functioning undertaken at community project sites in Australia. Where data available from the present series of projects has been utilised for this purpose, there have been indications of improved life opportunities being achieved during the period a community worker has been available, only to see a downturn when the services of that agent have terminated (Vinson, T., 2007, pp.99-100). The focus needs to be on strengthening the critical capacities of community functioning, whether they match the dimensions we earlier proposed, or some other appropriate formulation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A driver of strategy

To identify and assist Australian communities with high social needs and concentrated disadvantage, a Centre for Community Strengthening and Program Evaluation be established within the Commonwealth Government. The Centre should be so located as to facilitate its coordination of community service initiatives by government and non-government organisations, and undertake rigorous collaborative evaluations of community strengthening projects. It should be established on a basis that enables it to gather full statistical information on local populations while adhering to existing data confidentiality guidelines, in the manner illustrated by the present project. The Centre should continue to develop and refine the data gathering and dissemination of community wellbeing information pioneered by a number of non-government agencies over recent decades, including the sponsors of the present project.

In recommending a national Centre for Community Strengthening and Program Evaluation we are fully conscious of the responsibility state and territory governments have for strengthening disadvantaged communities within their respective jurisdictions. Community level interventions should be an integral part of their human service functions but they have generally not dealt with this facet of their work in a knowledgeable, focused way. Achieving confidence in community strengthening, and a willingness to cooperate fully with the proposed Centre, are priority requirements of state and territory governments. The latter need look no further than the summary of the high rates of occurrence within a limited number of highly disadvantaged areas of problems for which states have a primary responsibility – including

criminal convictions, imprisonment, child maltreatment, education and mental illness. The establishment of the recommended Commonwealth level centre needs to be matched by the creation of counterpart state and territory units performing linked coordinating, educational and evaluation functions. Their efficient operation would be less dependent on staffing numbers than their strategic location within the structure of government services, their supportive professional mandates and their capacity to draw upon seconded professional personnel for specific tasks and purposes.

2. An instigator of focused, practical change

The proposed Commonwealth Centre, while of modest size and incorporating the seconded services of existing specialist staff of relevant government agencies, should be endowed with the authority necessary to carry out its community strengthening functions and secure the necessary cooperation of Commonwealth and State authorities. That cooperation generally has been extended to projects in the present series but should be even more forthcoming when backed by a degree of official sanction.

The Centre should be staffed by officers who have practical experience of community work and research, and a demonstrated interest in, and capacity to contribute to, the furtherance of knowledge and approaches that bring practical benefits to cumulatively disadvantaged communities. The selection criteria should include candidates' demonstrated interest in working collaboratively with people engaged in community interventions, as well as possessing the detachment and objectivity needed to distinguish

tangible benefits from good intentions. If the present inequalities of opportunity are to be seriously remedied, the Centre must focus on strengthening disadvantaged communities, starting with those identified in the present report, while providing practical feedback to Government on policies and practices that will help close the opportunity gap that persistently separates those communities from mainstream Australian society.

3. Establishing and demonstrating high standards

The Centre for Community Strengthening and Program Evaluation should act as a repository of international and national research and practice insights into the evaluation of community interventions and insights gained, and should undertake interventions in its own right. The Centre should have particular responsibility for auspicing and participating in an exemplary project in each Australian jurisdiction, chosen jointly with the respective governments. The selected project sites should be among the communities nominated as 'most disadvantaged' in the present report and, for the reasons nominated in the report, should in the first instance, have a minimum intervention period of six to eight years, subject to further extension if judged necessary. The cost of exemplary projects should be shared between the Commonwealth and the relevant State or Territory Government. The methods employed and the outcomes achieved should be widely disseminated if our nation is to achieve the necessary knowledge and means of providing its citizens – especially its young – with life opportunities consistent with our tradition of the 'fair go.'

RECOMMENDED OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

A. Perseverance Given the persistence of documented cumulative disadvantage in a number of Australian communities, it is unrealistic to expect rapid short-term improvements following brief community strengthening interventions. What is needed is:

A firm political and administrative commitment to staying the distance with a manageable number of highly disadvantaged communities for the durations previously specified.

B. Knowledge The shaping of community strengthening endeavours is not a knowledge-free area. The choice of objectives and their sequencing, while substantially reflecting the views and aspirations of the communities involved, must also be influenced by knowledge gained from decades of community development practice and research findings. Vital in this regard is an underlying shared conception of the capacities of a well-functioning community.

The adoption of individual community initiatives should be based on appraisals of their contribution to the overall strengthening of the community and its ultimate capacity for strong independent action.

C. Extra-communal resources

The un-negotiated arrival of externally provided resources seldom provides a disadvantaged community with long-term benefits. Yet severely disadvantaged communities cannot attain their goals by 'spinning thin air'. The capacity to harness the arguments and make the case for external assistance is actually part of the negotiating equipment of

strong communities and disadvantaged ones sometimes need assistance simply to attain their fair share of infrastructural and other centrally dispersed resources. However, pragmatism needs to be balanced with community strengthening principles. The gaining of externally sourced assistance can be an important part of a community strengthening project provided, wherever practicable, the opportunity is taken to involve the community in prioritising the resources to be pursued and to be involved in, and learn from, participation in the negotiations entailed. Both of these activities rehearse skills that are central to effective communal management.

Examples of the afore-mentioned approach include identifying potential local employment opportunities and leveraging government and non-government organisations based outside of the community to employ locals. Such communal action could address the high unemployment levels which the present research confirms are a recurring feature of multiply disadvantaged communities in Australia. Likewise, pressing for additional skilled support to help ensure the successful launching of children's education and to help maintain their meaningful engagement in school and post-school training and education, would also address another of the recurring features of the most disadvantaged areas. So, too, would problem-solving collaboration between police and social agencies where the detection of early juvenile offending provides opportunities to intercept criminal careers in the making.

Frequently the object of community strengthening is aided by the more effective use of existing resources but that is not always possible. Constructive strategies sometimes come at additional

costs. However, in reckoning the scale of those outlays account needs to be taken of the institutional, service and social value costs of tolerating the continuation of the locally concentrated disadvantage that we have documented in this report.

In pursuing additional resources every effort must be made to rehearse skills that are central to effective communal management including the prioritising of objectives and local participation in associated negotiations.

D. Community-level changes

Community strengthening projects need to maintain a steady focus upon core problem-solving and effort-sustaining capacities of the community *qua community*. In earlier sections we have emphasised the importance in that regard of building organisational competence and realistic confidence in the pursuit of local goals. Key attitudinal requirements are the development of mutual trust and willingness to take action for the common good. The transformative power of these attributes, summarised in the notion of collective efficacy, is now widely recognised and was reflected in Victorian data included in the earlier publication *Dropping off the Edge* (Chapter 6: Assessing the Impact of Social Cohesion).

Without unduly restricting the intellectual framework employed, a focus upon community level change should be a mandatory requirement of projects intended to strengthen multiply disadvantaged communities.