



State Budget Submission
2009-10

Building on the Blueprint

SACOSS STATE BUDGET SUBMISSION 2008-09
Building on the Blueprint

Published December 2008 by the South Australian Council of Social Service.

This is the fourth in a series of documents presenting a comprehensive set of strategies that will contribute towards meeting the targets outlined in *Blueprint for the eradication of poverty in South Australia* (SACOSS, 2007).

ISSN 1836 - 5035

© South Australian Council of Social Service, 2008
47 King William Road
Unley, SA, 5061 Australia
Ph (08) 8305 4222
Fax (08) 8272 9500
sacoss@sacoss.org.au
www.sacoss.org.au

This publication is copyright. Apart from fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research criticism, or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Enquiries regarding this work should be addressed to the Communications Officer, South Australian Council of Social Service.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
INCOME	5
EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING	9
HEALTH AND WELLBEING.....	13
HOUSING	17
SOCIAL PARTICIPATION	21
REFERENCES	25



Justice, Opportunity and Shared Wealth for all South Australians

OUR VALUES

Accountability
Collaboration
Courage
Diversity
Dignity
Inclusion
Respect
Sustainability

OUR PURPOSE

To harness the views of the community to achieve

Progressive improvement of the quality of life for those most in need

A healthy, clean and safe environment

Equal access to social, political, economic, spiritual and
cultural opportunities and benefits

A vibrant and dynamic community sector

A strong and representative membership base

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Fair and Just Policy On a systemic level, we advocate on behalf of disadvantaged people and our member organisations. We initiate, develop and provide expert advice and opinion to achieve fair and just social policy.

A Strong and Credible Voice We provide independent information and comment to the South Australian community about social justice issues.

A Strong and Cohesive Sector We work closely with the community, government and our membership to promote cooperation, the sharing of resources, information and discussion and action on common issues.

A Well Managed Organisation We set and model a high standard of governance and responsible management and build the skills and capabilities of staff to meet the challenges of the organisation and the environment we work in.

Introduction

In 2009-2010, SACOSS, its members and those South Australians on whose behalf it advocates and represents, are seeking visionary, innovative and equitable budget results that will build justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians.

On December 5th 2007, SACOSS released the *Blueprint for the eradication of poverty in South Australia*. This document outlines a range of high level targets, related strategies and measures of success that, if adopted and achieved, will lead to the eradication of poverty in South Australia. As part of SACOSS's ongoing remit to tackle economic disadvantage and inequality in South Australia, our Budget submission builds on the *Blueprint* by highlighting contemporary priorities for government leadership and investment, and whole of community action. These priorities have been developed through in-depth and considered consultation with SACOSS members and stakeholders.

The social, political and environmental contributors to poverty are deep seated and complex, and SACOSS is cognisant that the eradication of poverty will not occur within a single term of any government. Consequently a committed adoption of short and long range strategies that seek to challenge and change unjust societal structures and ameliorate disadvantage is essential. Only then will real and measurable progress be made in redressing societal injustice and creating positive pathways out of poverty for our most vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians.

Contained within this document are 15 of the most important priorities for 2009-2010 that SACOSS and its members have identified as essential in lessening the impact of poverty amongst the most vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians. SACOSS views the opportunity to have meaningful input to the State Budget as very important in achieving our goal of advocating for the progressive improvement of the quality of life for those most vulnerable in our community.

In 2009-2010, we recognise that the State government faces critical external challenges that must be addressed, including economic stabilisation measures, the ongoing drought and other impacts of climate change, and the Council of Australian Governments National Reform Agenda.

The recent financial crisis will have ramifications for South Australia's long term social, economic and environmental stability, and ultimately any government's priorities in terms of equity. We suggest that the modest and low income South Australians most affected, initially, by this global problem are self-funded retirees and people who were planning to retire in the near future. These are people who depend on their financial assets for their living income. We expect that from early 2009, the impacts will move from financial markets into real markets and impact on a wider group of people. We anticipate a significant (but not necessarily 'dire') contracting of the real economy as global demand reduces, particularly for mining based commodities. In South Australia the citizens most affected are likely to be casual and part time workers who will work fewer hours, as well as labour market entrants and re-entrants. We also anticipate some 'stagflationary effects', particularly for low and modest income households, with prices of essential household items likely to rise at a faster rate than incomes. Utility costs (water, electricity, gas and petrol) will certainly rise at a higher rate than incomes. Fresh food and health costs will also rise at rates greater than pay levels. While house prices will almost certainly fall, downward "stickiness" in both rent and mortgage costs, particularly in the bottom half of the market, mean that housing prices are unlikely to fall significantly. The overall impact for many low and modest income households will be rising costs for a majority of the household budget, while incomes will fall as fewer work opportunities are available.

SACOSS members recognise that in this environment of contracting economic activity, the counter-cyclical role of government is of high importance. It is appropriate for State government spending to increase, particularly on tangible long-term physical and social infrastructure assets, to help maintain economic activity in the short term. In this economic environment it is appropriate for the State government to utilise past savings and to borrow to fund infrastructure development and thereby stimulate economic activity.

It is also recognised that a significant range of issues affecting the South Australian community involve Federal government responsibilities, and so negotiations with the Federal government will be crucial to the State's shorter and longer term economic outlook. We recognise significant processes with major Federal involvement include:

- *The Henry Taxation Review*. The retention of appropriate horizontal fiscal equalisation arrangements are very important to South Australia, as are other issues being considered by the Review.
- *Responding to climate change*, including the introduction of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Again, South Australian negotiations about the shape and compensations from the CPRS will be significant, while South Australia is particularly well placed to capitalise on Renewable Energy Targets.
- *Closing the Gap*, the strategy to reduce the gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other Australians.
- *Housing*. The South Australian government, having previously been a pacesetter in the provision of public housing, needs to continue active negotiations for better arrangements under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.
- *Cutler Review on Innovation*. It is likely that there will be opportunities to further broaden the State's longer term economic base through innovation, including social innovation. We recognise the potential for more funds to come to South Australia for innovation, for example in renewable energy generation, dryland farming and other areas of expertise particularly relevant to reducing climate change impacts.

The South Australian government is also at a challenging point in its cycle. After nearly seven years and eight budgets, many objectives have been achieved as a result of investment in social policy that has been reasonably well placed, although not always based on clear evidence. However, entrenched issues of disadvantage remain, and further targeted and enduring investment will be necessary to meet the upcoming challenges. Of particular concern to SACOSS and its members are the seemingly intractable issues of child safety and wellbeing, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes. These are key challenges for policy makers in the coming years, particularly in the lead up to the 2010 State election. Opportunities to address these issues also exist, particularly by enhancing collaborative relationships with the Federal government, community organisations and business.

Our Budget Submission focuses on the five key themes of our *Blueprint for the eradication of poverty in South Australia*, and identifies 15 priorities for consideration in 2009-2010. Some priorities require no financial investment, while others advocate better use of existing resources. There are also a number of priorities which are new and therefore require substantial investment.

SACOSS Blueprint Targets

Income Inequality

1. Increase the median income of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander South Australians to that of the wider population.
2. Ensure that all working South Australians earn a decent living wage and that youth wage and that trainee/apprentice wage levels are decent, equitable and fair.
3. Increase the SA net household disposable income per capita to at least 100% of the Australian average.
4. Raise the income levels of the poorest groups (principally households whose main source of income are government benefits) above the national average.

Labour Force Participation

5. Increase the participation rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to equal that of the wider population.
6. Increase the labour force participation rate to equal or better the national participation rate.

South Australia's Strategic Plan Targets

Target T1.1

Economic growth: exceed the national economic growth rate by 2014

Target T1.6

Labour productivity: exceed Australia's average labour productivity growth rate in trend terms by 2014.

Target T1.11

Unemployment: maintain equal or lower than the Australian average through to 2014.

Target T1.12

Employment participation: increase the employment to population ratio, standardised for age differences, to the Australian average.

Target T2.12

Work-life balance: improve the quality of life of all South Australians through maintenance of a healthy work-life balance.

Target T6.5

Economic disadvantage: reduce the percentage of South Australians receiving government benefits (excluding age pensions) as their major income source to below the Australian average by 2014.

Target T6.22

People with disabilities: double the number of people with disabilities employed by 2014.

Income

Poverty remains a continual feature of South Australian society. Poverty is a ‘multi-dimensional’ phenomenon, which means that people experience its damaging and harmful effects in different ways. Yet, despite the various ways that people experience poverty, they are all united in one of its main causes – the lack of a decent income. For people living on low incomes, the ability to enjoy a healthy life and participate fully in social life is extremely curtailed. Many people in low-income households remain geographically isolated, live in poor quality housing, and struggle to pay the bills. Raising the income levels of the poorest South Australians should remain a high priority, as it is the most important strategy to transforming the lives of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable South Australians.

Data from the 2001 census confirms that nearly a quarter (23.8%) of all families in the State are living on low incomes (ABS, 2001, cited Glover et al, 2006). The *Social Health Atlas of South Australia* reveals that people living on low incomes are not spread proportionately throughout the State. 23.8% of families living in metropolitan Adelaide are classified as low income, and this rises to 27.3% in country South Australia (Glover et al, 2006). The ‘headline’ data on the levels of income and wealth give a useful overview of the extent of poverty in South Australia. However, too much focus on the headline data can mask the multi-dimensional character of poverty. People from particular groups and household types are much more likely to live in poverty than other types of groups.

In the context of the economic implications of an ageing society, there is growing concern that larger numbers of people will retire living in poverty, and this is much more likely to affect women than men. The two main reasons for this are that women are likely to live longer than men, and also that women tend to earn significantly less than men (and earn less superannuation) than men over the course of their working lives.

The projected mining boom is unlikely to have a significant impact on the incomes and lives of low income South Australians. Evidence from Western Australia (WACOSS, 2008) suggests that income and wealth disparities do not disappear with the advent of mineral extraction revenues, rather the cost of living can rise at a faster rate than fixed incomes. In addition, the global financial crisis threatens to make the lives of many South Australians even more difficult. This confluence of events makes it imperative that the State government initiate responses that will ensure low income and disadvantaged South Australians do not suffer unduly.

PRIORITIES FOR 2009-2010

detailed on following pages

- **Review of the effectiveness of the current concession payment system.**
- **Conduct a full evaluation of SA Works to ensure further projects are built on strong evidence base.**
- **Inclusion of a community development commitment within the Economic Statement for South Australia.**

PRIORITY**Review of the effectiveness of the current concession payment system.**

Currently the raft of concessions available for people on low incomes is uncoordinated, ad hoc, and as such places significant barriers to access by those who most need them. Despite the original intent of concessions, the contemporary system can be seen as outdated and unresponsive to changing social and economic circumstances. The efficacy and equity of some concessions is questionable. A logical concession plan needs to be developed that encompasses all of the concessions currently available, and that eliminates overlap between State and Federal jurisdictions.

By providing a more targeted system that has as its focus both horizontal and vertical equity, government can ensure that all South Australians can have equitable access to goods and services. Additionally, a coherent concession plan would have the benefit of streamlining government processes, therefore reducing administration costs. SACOSS is currently developing a detailed position on the issues of concessions which we anticipate will assist the State government in its deliberation on concessions in the lead up to the 2010 election.

SACOSS proposes the review be completed by December 2009, with Government to commit to implementing a fairer system commencing on 1 July 2010.

Cost Estimate: \$240,000 in 2009-2010 for the review

PRIORITY**Conduct a full evaluation of SA Works to ensure further projects are built on a strong evidence base.**

The SA Works program needs to be adequately evaluated in order to gauge its effectiveness in providing opportunities for the long-term unemployed and those at risk of long-term unemployment. Projects under SA Works to date appear to be effective in many areas, however without a full evaluation it is unclear what can be learnt and translated to other projects to capitalise on these successes. Recent Federal government announcements indicate that further funding will be available for local infrastructure projects, which the State government should take advantage of in order to generate income and skills for targeted groups.

The impacts of a fully evaluated SA Works program will be felt throughout the State and by all sections of the community. The ability to translate proven strategies and share learning with areas requiring skilling programs would be very powerful in tackling the emerging skills shortages in South Australia.

Cost Estimate: \$180,000 for evaluation to be completed by December 2009.

PRIORITY**Inclusion of a community development commitment within the Economic Statement for South Australia.**

SACOSS believes that there are strong imperatives to use innovative approaches to current and emerging social issues that will shape the State's future economic policy.

Government can leverage off the non-government sector's commitment to economic development, through engagement with communities and the community services sector within a community building/social infrastructure framework. In his Adelaide Thinkers in Resident report, *Innovation in 360 Degrees*, Geoff Mulgan noted that "NGOs in South Australia as elsewhere are often involved in innovating to meet changing needs. But the ways in which they are supported are often antithetical to this role" (Mulgan, 2008). Government, business and the community services sector need to develop more innovative ways of working collaboratively towards common goals.

By including community development as a driving force behind economic development planning and implementation, the government can impact upon long term social and economic development. The main impacts will be felt by low income and disadvantaged South Australians who stand to benefit most from a more holistic approach to economic and community development, but all communities will feel the impacts as implementation takes hold.

The main benefits to such an approach include a greater community involvement in the development of social infrastructure and the greater participation of disadvantaged communities.

SACOSS recommends that the commitment be included in the final iteration of the Economic Statement for South Australia.

Cost Estimate: NIL

SACOSS Blueprint Targets

Access to Jobs

7. Reduce by more than half the current numbers of long term unemployed in South Australia.
8. Increase the rate of employment amongst young people and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to equal that of the wider community.

Quantity and quality of jobs

9. Increase the percentage of jobs in the market that are skilled, high income and permanent.
10. Ongoing State-wide planning to identify areas of skills/labour shortage.
11. Reduce the labour 'under-utilisation' rate in South Australia.

Skills, education and training

12. Free education for all who seek it.
13. Ensure that all South Australians have training /education opportunities that will enable them to effectively compete for employment.
14. Ensure equity of access and high quality of education/training in rural and metropolitan areas.

South Australia's Strategic Plan Targets

Target T1.1

Economic growth: exceed the national economic growth rate by 2014.

Target T1.6

Labour productivity: exceed Australia's average labour productivity growth rate in real terms by 2014.

Target T1.11

Unemployment: maintain equal or lower than the national average through to 2014.

Target T1.12

Employment participation: increase the employment to population ratio, standardised for age differences, to the Australian average.

Target T6.15

Learning or earning: by 2010 increase the number of 15-19 year olds engaged fulltime in school, work or further education/training (or combination thereof) to 90%.

Target T6.16

SACE or equivalent: increase yearly the proportion of 15-19 year olds who achieve the SACE or comparable senior secondary qualification.

Target T6.22

People with disabilities: double the number of people with disabilities employed by 2014.

Employment, Education and Training

South Australia is approaching a vital period in its economic and social development. The potential mining 'boom' and the recent global credit crisis indicate that South Australia needs to focus its energies on creating and implementing economic change that will ensure the State economy remains robust into the future. It is also imperative that South Australia looks to its social infrastructure and ensures the focus of any initiatives and strategies are not too narrow. A vital element of these changes will be the area of employment, education and training.

Statistics show that the unemployment rate in South Australia remains higher than the national average, and the workforce participation rate remains lower. At the same time, the level of participation in VET remains lower than the national average (ABS, 2007, cited DFEEST, 2008). South Australia also has below average numbers of employees with non-school qualifications at 49% of the total workforce, as compared to the national average of 52.5% (ABS, 2007). 2003 figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicate that South Australia has the lowest level of workforce participation for persons with a disability in Australia. These lower participation rates also equate to a higher unemployment rate of 9.2%, compared to 6% for the total population in the same period (ABS, 2003).

It is also clear that South Australia is experiencing significant unmet demand for employment growth in the health and community services sector. Growth in the provision of health and community services must run in parallel with general economic growth, and the health and community services sector at this stage would find it difficult to respond to increases in general levels of economic growth. This will likely result in communities lacking the support services necessary to maintain social support and cohesion. More effort must be made to ensure the health and community services sector is sustainable, and that greater attention is paid to increased wages, better conditions, and more training opportunities.

Based on the recent Keating report released by the Economic Development Board (Keating, 2008), the ageing population in South Australia and the projected need for greater workforce participation require a significant response from the State government, to ensure that these needs are met in a flexible and responsive manner, and adjusted according to economic conditions.

The current focus and drive for economic growth must be cognisant of the characteristics of the South Australian labour market and the principles of a fair and inclusive society.

The establishment in South Australia of a National Centre for Innovation is a positive statement about the importance of fostering innovation as part of leveraging productivity improvements. Given the size and importance of our Community Services infrastructure as part of our overall economy, particular focus should be given to the promotion of innovation across this industry sector. This will not only lead to potential productivity gains, but could help the South Australian community services sector re-establish a national leadership role in the industry and look to market innovative products externally. The new Centre for Innovation represents an opportunity for further collaboration between government, academia and industry to help create an environment of innovation for all industries.

..... PRIORITIES FOR 2009-2010

detailed on following pages

- **Establish quotas for long-term unemployed workers on government projects.**
 - **Inclusion of specific strategies and funding for unemployed and disengaged people in the proposed five year plan for skills and workforce development in South Australia.**
 - **Incorporate VET training elements into the revised SACE framework.**
-

PRIORITY**Establish quotas for long-term unemployed workers on government projects.**

A 10% quota for long-term unemployed and other at risk and disengaged sections of society on large government capital projects over \$10m would allow for greater workforce participation, as well as providing education and training opportunities for those currently disengaged from the workforce. Particular focus should be given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this strategy. Past urban regeneration projects have shown that the engagement of unemployed persons is viable in this context. Additionally, recently announced Federal government funding for local infrastructure projects means that there should be greater scope for the rollout of applicable projects.

Major economic impacts of this strategy include increased production through the better utilisation of currently underutilised labour, an increase in income available in communities, and a reduction on government expenditure in terms of welfare provision.

Additional social impacts will be felt as participants become increasingly involved in their local communities as members of the workforce.

Concerns regarding the monitoring of this type of strategy have been raised in the past. However SACOSS believes that this should be managed under the standard contracting conditions and reporting. Given the implementation of public-private partnership frameworks, the cost to government in terms of monitoring should be minimal, and should be achievable with no net cost involved.

Cost Estimate: NIL

PRIORITY**Inclusion of specific strategies and funding for unemployed and disengaged people in the proposed five year plan for skills and workforce development in South Australia.**

Given that labour force and Vocational Education and Training (VET) participation rates are lower in South Australia than in Australia as a whole, it is vital that adequate funding be allocated to the creation and implementation of a holistic skills strategy for South Australia. Trends identified in recent reports (Keating, 2007; Carson, Maher and King, 2007) indicate that South Australia is facing skills and workforce development challenges and opportunities. Utilising these reports and the knowledge and experience gained through the Industry Workforce Action Plans consultation process, a wider view of workforce development can be achieved that is not focused solely on pre-employment vocational training.

An imperative within this priority is a focus on employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly in rural and remote South Australia. This focus should include jobs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both in the growing mining sector and in services, specifically policing, health, education and child protection.

Adequate and appropriate skills strategies that are targeted at skills-deficient industries and sectors can help to ameliorate the future skills shortages raised in the Keating Report. Additionally, such a strategy would result in greater quality and quantity of jobs in South Australia through engagement with all sectors and industries.

In South Australia there is a marked 'social gradient' in both labour force participation and educational attainment. In other words, the poorest population groups have much worse outcomes than the wealthiest people in these different spheres of social life. The lowest

socio-economic groups are far less likely to be employed; are more likely to be 'marginally attached' to the labour force; and where they are employed, are concentrated in the poorest paying sectors. This is particularly the case for women.

Cost Estimate: \$12.5 million (\$2.5 million per year for each of the five years)

PRIORITY

Incorporate VET training elements into the revised SACE framework.

While moves towards a more holistic approach to education through VET is welcomed, current frameworks for the provision of VET in schools require additional funding. Under current arrangements, schools can find it difficult to access funding to implement VET programs, thus creating an environment of uncertainty that is not conducive to the attainment of educational aspirations. In particular, funding needs to be allocated to:

1. Mapping of current VET programs to emerging skills shortages in South Australia.
2. Additional funding for the implementation of VET programs in schools.
3. Enabling schools to create local business and community networks.

This initiative should also be cognisant of the work occurring under DFEEST, most particularly the Skills Strategy announced in April 2008 and the five year skills plan being developed by the Training and Skills Commission. Secondary school retention rates are significantly lower in South Australia than in the whole of Australia. Research shows that not completing this level of education can have significant long term effects on the life chances of a person. 24 year olds who have not completed schooling are twice as likely to be unemployed as those who do (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2007). Given the congruence in lower levels of VET participation in South Australia, the increased focus on providing a wide range of vocational pathways in secondary schooling will help to raise retention rates, as well as address key economic and social goals.

While moves are already being made in this regard, it is necessary to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to enable all sectors to work collaboratively with government to address current and future skills shortages while providing additional avenues to employment for young people.

Additionally, projected skills shortages can be mitigated against by providing pathways for both young people and potential employers through greater funding for support structures within schools, industry and local communities. This priority aims to strengthen the Skills Statement for South Australia.

Cost Estimate:

- 1. Mapping of current VET programs:
\$180,000 (one off cost, to be undertaken centrally by December 2009).**
- 2. Additional funding for the implementation of VET programs in schools:
\$2.5 million per year**
- 3. Enabling schools to create local business and community networks:
\$960,000 per year (one FTE for each of the 12 regions).**

SACOSS Blueprint Targets

Focus on prevention and early intervention

15. Move the focus of health services provision from tertiary to primary health care.
16. Establish integrated primary health care networks, addressing dental, physical, mental and social health and wellbeing, and encompassing prevention and early intervention.
17. Ensure access to the infrastructure required to enable all members of the community, throughout the State, to live safely and healthily.
18. Ensure that all children and young people have access to health education and awareness in the school curricula.

Access and equity of outcomes

19. Provide equity of access to all public and private health-related services for all communities.
20. Eliminate health status inequities in all areas for populations within the State, based on geographic and population groups, to a variable rate of no greater than 10%.
21. Ensure access to affordable, healthy food for all communities.
22. Reduce waiting lists to ensure sufficiently timely access to health services such that any wait does not compound either the medical condition or adversely impact on an individual's wellbeing or circumstance.

South Australia's Strategic Plan Targets

Target T2.4

Healthy South Australians: increase the healthy life expectancy of South Australians by 5% for males and 3% for females by 2014.

Target T2.7

Psychological wellbeing: equal or lower than the Australian average for psychological distress by 2014

Health and Wellbeing

SACOSS seeks the eradication of health status inequities across all population groups and the establishment of a primary health care focus for wellbeing in the State.

The framework of the 'social determinants of health' is seen as the starting point for tackling health inequities. To understand this approach it is worth making the distinction between health inequality and health inequity. Health inequalities refer to the differences in health status of individuals and groups across different socio-economic and ethnic or racial groups. The difference between health inequality and inequity is outlined thus by the World Health Organization's Commission on Social Determinants of Health: "Not all health inequalities are unjust or inequitable. If good health were simply unattainable, this would be unfortunate but not unjust. Where inequalities in health are avoidable, yet are not avoided, they are inequitable" (CSDH, 2007).

To understand why health inequity occurs, the broader social and economic conditions need to be understood. The social determinants of health approach suggests that the social, political, environmental, and economic conditions of people's lives affect their health. Some of the most significant determinants include income, socio-economic position, social support, education, employment, social and physical environments, gender, and access to services. This approach to tackling health inequity is supported by research from the World Health Organization's Healthy Cities Programme, that argues "health and quality of life can be improved by modification of living conditions in the home, school, workplace, city – the places or settings where people live and work. Health status is often determined more by the conditions in these settings than merely the lack of or provision of health care services" (WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, 2007).

The people with the poorest health outcomes in South Australia are clearly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from remote communities. While considerable amounts of good work are already underway in addressing health and community wellbeing in these communities, a consolidated, resourced health and wellbeing strategy across both government and community continues to be a high priority.

PRIORITIES FOR 2009-2010

detailed on following pages

- **Implement a targeted alcohol reduction social marketing campaign.**
- **Review of transport issues linked to use of health services.**
- **Targeted rollout of 'Community Foodies' and other community based food and nutrition programs.**

PRIORITY**Implement a targeted alcohol reduction social marketing campaign.**

Alcohol is seen as a significant contributor to a significant number of negative health and social outcomes. It is therefore recommended that a social marketing campaign be developed to address the negative impacts of alcohol in South Australia. Much of the current approach to alcohol related issues is tertiary in nature, a shift in focus to prevention will emphasise early intervention and reduce demand for acute alcohol treatment services. Broad based health promotion activities such as a targeted social marketing campaign should be seen as an investment in the prevention of harm associated with alcohol use across all South Australian communities.

Each year approximately 3000 people die as a result of excessive alcohol consumption and around 65 000 people are hospitalised. Long-term excessive alcohol consumption is associated with:

- foetal alcohol syndrome
- children referred to child protection services
- physical and sexual violence
- high blood pressure, strokes and liver damage
- sexual impotence and reduced fertility
- increased risk of breast cancer
- brain damage with mood and personality changes
- concentration and memory problems.

In addition to health problems, alcohol also impacts on relationships, finances, work, and general quality of life.

This strategy builds on the work of the National Alcohol Strategy 2006-2009.

Cost Estimate: \$3.5 million over four years, commencing 1 January 2010

PRIORITY**Review of transport issues linked to use of health services.**

Health services are major generators of passenger transport demand. Travel to and from health facilities is a problem for “transport disadvantaged”, that is, those with limited access and people who cannot use or have difficulty in using conventional public and private transport. This impacts on a person’s ability to access health services. People without access to private or public transport, and there are many South Australians facing this reality, are more likely to be those with socio-economic and health disadvantages, exacerbating the difficulty of reducing the gap between people with the best and poorest health outcomes. These issues are amplified in remote and regional areas.

There has been inadequate recognition of the impact decisions about transport, land use and infrastructure have on health, and as the government moves towards more centralised health servicing it is imperative the issue of transport be addressed with priority.

This strategy involves mapping the transport barriers facing disadvantaged groups when accessing health and wellbeing services. It is envisaged the current financial supports for people requiring transport will be reviewed to ensure a revised and more coordinated approach to enabling access to health services. The review will seek to evaluate the extent of these issues and identify strategies to address both physical and financial barriers for disadvantaged people.

Cost Estimate: \$180,000 (review to be completed by June 2010)

PRIORITY**Targeted rollout of 'Community Foodies' and other community based food and nutrition programs.**

Low income communities are known to have poorer diets than those communities with greater wealth. A significant number of households live in 'food deserts' in Adelaide: areas in which people experience geographical and/or financial problems in acquiring healthy food. Improved access to and coordination of community based food programs will assist in the elimination of these health status inequities.

This strategy involves the State government providing leadership in community based food access programs in the four lowest socio-economic status area in South Australia, initiating and supporting local sustainable practices such as the peer-based Community Foodies, community gardens and food co-operatives. Community based food programs grow and/or distribute affordable, nutritious food in areas of need, in a way that preserves and enhances the built environment, provides economic opportunity and good health for individuals and communities, and connects people to the land around them. Sustainable food programs focus on both processes and produce, create fresh, healthy produce for local consumption and at the same time foster personal and social change.

SACOSS advocates for food and nutrition programs that build social capital. Due to its focus on community building, this strategy aims to strengthen the State government's Eat Well Be Active Agenda.

**Cost Estimate: \$3.5 million
(four programs, \$875,000 for each program over four years)**

SACOSS Blueprint Targets

Access and affordability

23. Ensure equity of access to secure, affordable, adaptable housing for all, in particular for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander South Australians.
24. Increase in support and accommodation services for disadvantaged South Australians.
25. Ensure all new social housing is affordable (including bills and utilities), and environmentally sustainable with adequate quality of essentials and amenities.
26. Establish a charter of rights for public and community tenants, and tenancy legislation to guarantee rights and security.
27. Ensure affordable housing for all costs not more than 25% of a household's gross income.

Infrastructure

28. Ensure social and affordable housing is located in areas of high employment, and adequate social infrastructure and supports.
29. Ensure access to appropriate housing for those in urgent need, with a priority for women and children.
30. Ensure equity of access to affordable housing for South Australians living in rural and regional communities.
31. Increase public and community housing stock and infrastructure to meet the State's population needs.

South Australia's Strategic Plan Targets

Target T6.6

Homelessness: halve the number of 'rough sleepers' in South Australia by 2010 and maintain thereafter.

Target T6.7

Affordable housing: increase affordable home purchase and rental opportunities by 5 percentage points by 2014.

Target T6.10

Housing for people with disabilities: double the number of people with disabilities appropriately housed and supported in community based accommodation by 2014.

Housing

Public housing stock in South Australia has been decreasing for over a decade. The reason for this marked decline is that funding to provide government housing for the disadvantaged from the Federal government, as well as matched funds from the State government (as part of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement), has decreased significantly.

This decline in public housing funding has come at a time when the private rental and housing market has exploded with overly inflated rents and house prices. This is further impacted upon by a global economic crisis and significant increases in the cost of living.

The State government's sale of public housing must cease if further disadvantage is to be avoided to people who cannot compete in the current private rental market.

Across Australia 100,000 people have been recorded as being homeless. Much of this homelessness is due to the lack of available, appropriate and affordable housing. Increasing the amount of public and community housing available for vulnerable South Australians would have a direct impact on achieving SASP Target 6.6 – "halve the number of 'rough sleepers' in South Australia".

In addition, stocks of crisis accommodation dwellings are also on the decrease in South Australia. While nationally in 2006-07 there was an increase of 168 dwellings from 2005, in South Australia the number of crisis accommodation dwellings decreased from 260 in June 2006 to 255 in June 2007.

Research shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not only over-represented in the public housing market, but they also often live in multiple-family households (ATSIC, 2003). Thus an additional emphasis needs to occur to address overcrowding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households.

PRIORITIES FOR 2009-2010

detailed on following pages

- **Stimulate an increase in public and/or community housing stock.**
- **Transfer 5,000 public housing properties to the Community Housing sector.**
- **Access to adequate supports for high needs housing tenants.**

PRIORITY**Stimulate an increase in public and or community housing stock.**

Given recent research showing that South Australia will need to dramatically increase its public housing stock (Beer et al, 2004), it is clear that Federal and matched State government funding for this increase to occur. There needs to be a particular emphasis on additional public housing in rural and regional centres as disadvantage and competition for limited private dwellings is increasing. By injecting much-needed funding into the public housing market, the waiting list should be cut from the 26,201 as it now stands (AIHW, 2008).

Public housing has been decreasing significantly over the past 15 years in South Australia. This decrease has led to increasing stress and disadvantage for people who subsist on low incomes (Council to Homeless Persons, 2005). The State government must discontinue its reliance on inadequate Federal funding and commit to developing its own goals and funding streams to alleviate these issues, as well as working within the framework of the upcoming National Affordable Housing Agreement.

The benefits of increasing public housing stock will be twofold. Increasing public housing will alleviate the demand that has been placed on the private rental market while also providing much needed housing for people who are unable to compete in the rental market. In addition, as appropriate housing is an important element of the social determinants of health, the positive health effects gained through housing have the potential to lead to decreases in health spending and increases in social inclusion and social capital (Council to Homeless Persons, 2005).

The cost estimate assumes a proportional matching basis from the State and Federal governments and is in line with the recommendations provided to the Federal government.

Cost Estimate: SACOSS anticipates the total cost of this priority to be \$400 million over four years. This includes current allocations and any allocations from the State and Federal housing agreement currently under negotiation.

PRIORITY**Transfer 5,000 public housing properties to the Community Housing sector.**

Alter current debenture and rent return arrangements between Community Housing Organisations and Housing SA. The State government asserts that the costs to maintain public housing have increased dramatically in the past decade and have become prohibitive to providing quality public housing. SACOSS believes that this priority will assist in relieving the burden of maintenance costs on the State government.

Acknowledging that government has a substantial pecuniary interest in Community Housing stock, appropriate regulatory amendments need to be put in place to enable an overall increase in the supply of affordable housing in South Australia and to protect these assets. Transferring stock to Community Housing organisations and freeing up regulatory burdens will allow greater access to equity, in order to raise capital and to ultimately increase affordable housing stock.

Community Housing organisations are well placed to deliver additional affordable housing and support services for low income and vulnerable South Australians. It can be argued that Community Housing has a number of potential advantages over traditional public housing tenure, including:

- increased flexibility in meeting housing needs and asset management

- long term secure and affordable housing
- empowerment of tenants and development of a community focus
- drawing in the support of agencies which already provide for those in need and are already assisting in addressing these needs
- cost effective housing support
- skill development often leading to reduced reliance on government benefits
- opportunities to contribute to local social capital and social inclusion

Community Housing organisations and their tenants are committed to contributing their fair share of hard work to make sure properties are adequately maintained, rents are collected and that families, whatever their size and shape, have a home that is safe, secure, affordable and appropriate. Tenants, if they are able, are encouraged to help run the non-profit organisations that house them. This tenant involvement promotes self reliance and reciprocity rather than dependence.

Cost Estimate: dependent upon the transfer process chosen by State government.

PRIORITY

Access to adequate supports for high needs housing tenants.

Ensure all allocations of housing to people with high and complex needs are linked to appropriate support services. Residents in social and public housing are increasingly drawn from vulnerable populations characterised by multiple and complex needs rather than low income alone. This priority will reduce the number of failed tenancies, which are expensive, in terms of both financial and social costs.

Access to adequate housing is a basic human right under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights. Housing is also fundamental to enabling health and wellbeing, education, employment, social inclusion and stability. What is less publicly acknowledged is the challenge that some vulnerable people face in maintaining a stable tenancy.

People with high and complex needs are often unable to negotiate through a difficult issue relating to their tenancy and the results can include periods of homelessness. Situations of domestic or family violence, discrimination, mental health and gambling are among the risk factors of homelessness, and support can be provided through existing services. There is a recognition, widely held both by the government and non government sectors, that support services are crucial to successful tenancies when there are complex needs.

Cost Estimate: NIL

SACOSS Blueprint Targets

Access and Opportunity

32. Increase involvement by vulnerable and excluded groups in all community activities.
33. Eliminate health status, including mental health status, as a barrier to community participation.
34. Eliminate lack of transport or mobility as an impediment to social participation.

Addictions

35. Reduce average gambling losses per adult from electronic gaming machines in regions of socio-economic disadvantage by 30%.
36. Reduce incidences of alcohol and other substance abuse and recidivism (in relation to substance abuse).

Restoration and rehabilitation

37. Access to effective rehabilitation programs for all offenders
38. Reduce the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison, proportionate to their numbers in the overall State population.
39. Halve the numbers of South Australians sent to prison, through the vigorous pursuit of restorative justice, diversionary court systems, and alternative sentencing options.
40. Ensure living conditions within prisons are safe and consistent with community living standards.
41. Increase in use of restorative justice processes to enable victims of crime to engage more meaningfully.
42. Reduce the impact of crime on its victims.

South Australia's Strategic Plan Targets

Target T2.7

Psychological wellbeing: equal or lower than the Australian average for psychological distress by 2014.

Target T2.8

Statewide crime rates: reduce victim reported crime by 12% by 2014.

Target T3.6

Use of public transport: increase the use of public transport to 10% of metropolitan weekday passenger vehicle kilometres travelled by 2018.

Social Participation

Social participation refers to the plethora of ways in which people are able to engage with and feel a part of their community. Experiences of 'social participation' are key contributors to the overall health and vibrancy of individuals and the wider community.

The healthy development and wellbeing of a growing number of South Australian children and young people is being impaired as a result of their experiences of neglect and abuse. Across Australia, the number of substantiations of abuse and neglect has risen dramatically over the past decade and in South Australia, the number of children on care and protection orders has risen from 3.3 per 1,000 children in 1997 to 5.4 per 1,000 children in 2007 (AIHW, Child Protection, 2006-07).

Child protection experts and advocacy groups around Australia have labeled as inadequate and unsustainable the current responses to dealing with child abuse and neglect. Systems remain reactive and caught in crisis management of a problem that requires a more sophisticated approach to family and social deprivation and stress. An alternative strategy is needed in South Australia that balances our response to children and young people at risk.

Additionally, there is an enormous cost burden both in financial and social terms to maintain the current populist criminal justice system. Notwithstanding the immense financial commitment to house the increasing numbers of prisoners being placed in an already overcrowded prison system, there are also health and social consequences to incarceration that have the potential to affect our communities for generations. Conversely, community based sentences and diversionary programs – including restorative justice processes – shift the focus from retribution to inclusion. Offenders are still held accountable to society and victims, but the sanctions are collaboratively decided upon, involving the victim of the offence, and the offender is left with a feeling that they are included within their community.

It is also crucial that restorative processes are expanded in juvenile justice settings, including the provision of restorative processes as part of Youth Court proceedings, not just the Family Group Conferencing diversions. Restorative behaviour development processes should be integrated into juvenile detention facilities. These very same processes are also crucial to school behaviour development. Restorative practices in schools reduce poor behaviour, increase school harmony, importantly reduce social exclusion (such as suspensions and detentions), and increase learning outcomes. Both of these outcomes lead young people significantly increase the chances of negative engagement with the juvenile justice system.

In regards to infrastructure and its effect on social participation, for decades the transport system in South Australia has been undercapitalised. This has led to a system that is ill-equipped to support the State's economic growth, including providing effective traffic corridors for the looming mining boom and linking regional and remote communities. People in regional and remote communities have virtually no access to public transport systems and in some cases are cut off from the communities around them. Greater public transport systems, transport hubs and more effective transport corridors must be developed.

PRIORITIES FOR 2009-2010

detailed on following pages

- **Support the adoption of a public health approach for child protection in South Australia.**
- **Funds to be made available for restorative justice programs.**
- **Re-prioritise the 2030 transport plan.**

PRIORITY**Support the adoption of a public health approach for child protection in South Australia.**

The current system for managing child protection investigations was established in South Australia some 25 years ago and is no longer regarded as an effective approach for vulnerable children and families. The number of vulnerable children and families has increased significantly, and it is recognised that, aside from being unhelpful to those it is intended to assist, the current system is unsustainable. There are strong arguments that this system not only places further strain upon already vulnerable children but that the ramifications extend to problems with family stability and the chances of eventual reunification.

The intent of any child protection system is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. The current system is overloaded, placing extreme strain on those who are responsible for the interventions, as well as the children who may be at risk. A reliance on an intensive investigative approach to managing increasing notifications of abuse and neglect is both inefficient and can work against the safety and wellbeing of children.

Addressing child protection within a public health framework will enable the issues to be analysed in the context of a population health approach, taking due account of the social determinants of health instead of the current focus on the deficits of parent/s and caregivers. It also would promote early intervention from a range of universal and secondary services, instead of relying on a tertiary intervention as the mode of engagement with families under stress.

The introduction of a strength based approach will enable better processes and outcomes for children and families where safety is a significant concern by helping to build capacity in families. Such an approach would also encourage the involvement of community groups and organisations in interventions aimed at supporting families and keeping children safe, helping to make child protection a community responsibility.

Cost Estimate: \$10 million per year (to be invested in building a broader network of targeted secondary intervention family strengthening programs)**PRIORITY****Funds to be made available for restorative justice programs.**

Through the impacts of recent legislative changes the criminal justice system, particularly the courts and corrections systems, have been burgeoning under increasing pressure. Prisons across South Australia are facing unprecedented levels of overcrowding, leading to negative effects both within the prison system and beyond to families and communities.

For offenders who have committed less serious crimes (particularly young offenders), entering the prison system can lead to a path of recidivism and further incarceration over their lifespan. In addition, the cost of housing prisoners is immense and the cost is increasing each year.

Restorative justice processes, such as the 'conferencing' used in juvenile justice matters, are already utilised in the South Australian criminal justice system. Restorative justice processes aim to create an environment applicable to crimes across the spectrum, and that makes the offender more accountable to those they have harmed in a socially inclusive way. This may divert them from the criminal justice system, and also significantly assists the victims. The crucial component of these processes is the face to face contact between victim and offender, and the focus on repairing the harm caused by crime.

The benefits of restorative justice are threefold: victims have a greater voice in the development of sentencing for offences; offenders are able to make recompense for their crimes outside of the prison system; and it is likely that some of these offenders remain outside of the prison system and in their own community, and as such restorative justice processes lessen the burden on an already overcrowded and burgeoning criminal justice system.

SACOSS recommends that funding be made available to adequately resource the restorative justice and diversionary processes that are currently available, to assist the provisions of these initiatives to work more effectively and to aid in the development of further restorative justice initiatives.

Cost Estimate: \$3.5 million per year.

PRIORITY

Re-prioritise the 2030 transport plan.

The 2030 transport plan by the Committee for Adelaide Roads, released in May 2008, sets out both the deficits and opportunities for the transport system in South Australia. Priorities within this report need to be reviewed to ensure that areas with little or no current transport are dealt with first. This will aid in fostering social participation. Inclusion of public transport systems and transport hubs in remote and regional areas (including rail systems) must also be prioritised to link those areas with neighbouring communities and the metropolitan area.

In the greater metropolitan area, more attention needs to be paid to the provision of alternative transport options, such as bicycle lanes on roads and dedicated bicycle ways that are separated from major roadways. Increased safety for cyclists is necessary to foster an environment in which all members of society view cycling as a viable option instead of a dangerous pastime spent avoiding conflict with motor vehicles. The benefits of a more bicycle-friendly city are clear from the European experience, as well as better planned centres such as Canberra.

This plan has the potential to create much needed transport connectivity for people not only across the metropolitan area but also in connecting people who live in regional and remote communities with their neighbouring communities and the city. This connectivity is essential for people to engage with their communities, access health care, participate in social and sporting events and access education.

There is significant scope for the involvement of local government in forward-thinking transport planning in South Australia. The deeper knowledge of LGAs regarding the transport and planning needs of their communities places them in a unique position to work with the State government on issues around transport-oriented development, public transport provision, and planning for interlinked bicycle-friendly communities. By taking on a connecting role, the State government can ensure that local government planning is supported and that local-level plans are implemented within a wider strategic framework.

Cost Estimate: NIL

References

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2008), 'Crisis Accommodation Program 2006-07 - Commonwealth State Housing Agreement national data report', viewed [online] 20 October 2008 <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/hou/cap06-07/cap06-07.pdf>

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2008), 'Public Rental Housing 2006-07: Commonwealth State Housing Agreement national data report', viewed [online] 20 October 2008 <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10550>

Beer et al (2004), *No Easy Solution: Housing Options for Low Income South Australians: Final Report*, July 2004.

Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) (2007), IER/EQH, World Health Organization, *Achieving Health Equity: from root causes to fair outcomes, Commission On Social Determinants Of Health Interim Statement*, 2007, p. 14, viewed [online] 27 October 2008 http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2007/interim_statement_eng.pdf

Council to Homeless Persons (2005), 'Public Housing in Australia is in Decline: The Facts Speak for Themselves', viewed [online] 20 October 2008 http://www.chp.org.au/public_library/items/2005/01/00042-upload-00001.doc

Day, A., Casey, S (2008), 'Review of Programs in Youth Training Centres: Part 2: Consultation and Recommendations', for the Guardian for Children and Young People, March 2008.

Glover, J. et al (2006) *A Social Health Atlas of South Australia* (3rd Edition), Public Health Information Unit, South Australian Department of Health.

Government of South Australia (2007), *South Australia's Strategic Plan*, January 2007.

SACOSS (2007), *Blueprint for the eradication of poverty in South Australia*, South Australian Council of Social Service, Adelaide.

Staehli, D (2003), 'Truth and Lies in Inquisitions and the Adversarial System', viewed [online] 27 October 2008 <http://www.corruptionprevention.net/resources/Forum/2003/Staehli/Staehli.PDF>

WACOSS (2008), *The Boom is Busted for 400,000 of Us: WACOSS Cost of Living Paper*, August 2008, Western Australian Council of Social Service, Perth.

World Health Organization. Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (2007), *Training manual for the healthy city programme*, viewed [online] 27 October 2008 http://www.emro.who.int/cbi/pdf/healthcities_manual.pdf

