Community Services Sector Review
Social Inclusion Policy Overview
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Introduction

Moreton Bay Regional Council recognises that investment in a strong community services sector is crucial to ensuring the health and wellbeing of the community, now and into the future. In assisting the continuing development of a strong community services sector, the Community Services Sector Review (CSSR) project provides Council, other levels of government and the community sector with strategic direction in the provision of community services and appropriate community service support in the region. The CSSR project is a long-term vision that Council continues to progress in partnership with the community sector, the Regional Development Australia Moreton Bay, the Queensland Department of Health and the Queensland Department of Communities.

As a component of the CSSR project, this policy overview aims to identify the relevant social inclusion related governmental policy framework that the community services sector operates within.

The CSSR project will be guided by a series of documents and processes including the:

1. Social Inclusion Profile
2. Policy Overview
3. Community Services Review
   A. Community Service Identification
   B. Sector Engagement Needs and Opportunities Report for Consultation
   C. Strategy Development and Action Planning

This document should be read in conjunction with the documents described above to provide a comprehensive overview of the CSSR project. Cumulatively, these pieces of work will assist Council and other levels of government in the identification of strategic resourcing priorities associated with sector and community development initiatives.

These documents are also intended as a resource for the community services sector in assisting the planning for and delivery of community programs and services, in the formation of effective collaborations and partnerships and in providing an advocacy tool for attracting additional resources.

In accordance with the long term vision of the CSSR project, it is expected that the prioritised findings and recommendations identified throughout these documents will require consultation and appropriate exploration and analysis. Implementation strategies and associated methodologies will be identified in consultation with the community sector at relevant stages of the project’s evolution.
Why do we need a policy overview?

This discussion outlines the relevant international influences and government policy and agreements which impact the provision of community services in and around the Moreton Bay Region. The community services sector is heavily influenced by the three tiers of government and the related government policy agendas and the funding arrangements created through various national and state partnerships and funding agreements.

It is recognised that an understanding of the current social inclusion related policy landscape is critical in advancing the regions’ community services sector needs. Local initiatives are reduced in their successes when they do not take into account government policy and program directions. Accordingly, the following discussion explores the policy imperatives and directions impacting community services and programs.

Starting with international influences, such as the United Nations and World Health Organisation policy frameworks, the discussion continues framed by Commonwealth and State government policy imperatives.

Within the region, Council works in close collaboration with a range of funded and unfunded community sector based service providers and private sector agencies. This discussion aims to describe the context within which community services in the Moreton Bay Region operate, as a part of a dynamic and multi-layered policy framework.

Defining the Policy Context

We will begin the discussion by presenting the various influences and dynamics in the policy context. A brief explanation of the various levels of government and their roles in setting the policy agenda is also canvassed here.

National Government

The distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the Federal and State governments dates as far back to Section 51 of the Australian Constitution Act 1901. Section 51 establishes that certain matters, including excise and taxation, border control and security, health and welfare are reserved for the Federal government, whereas other matters have been devolved to the State and Territory Governments. For reasons of efficiency, the State then devolves some of this responsibility through the respective Local Government Acts to local and Regional Governments, traditionally referred to as roads, rates and rubbish. Many local government authorities; however, have expanded beyond this traditional focus to include town planning functions, building and health standard creations, community services and economic development.

The Federal Government Policy agenda and its implementation through State/Federal Government Agreements, National Reform Agenda’s and National Partnership Agreements, have a direct impact on funding allocations for the community services sector. Therefore, the policy agenda of the Australian Federal Government has a direct impact on how and what community services will receive and/or continue to receive in terms of resourcing.

State Government

In addition to the National government policy agenda ‘flow on’ reflected in State government policy, the State government policy agenda includes a focus on community safety, policing, education and health administration, which are principally delivered under the umbrella of the COAG and State/Federal Agreements. The majority of the detail regarding a particular policy agenda is found at the Federal/State level of the policy discussion.
**Government Departments**

Whilst National and State Government departments often undergo restructures and reorganise the departments responsible for implementing agreed strategies and plans, it is the policy agenda that determines what will and what will not be included within those agreements, strategies and plans. The detail regarding State Government strategies are usually found on the respective departmental website.

**Policy or Strategy**

At this point it may be worth highlighting the key differences between (what are generally referred to as) policies and strategies. Although the words ‘strategy’ and ‘policy’ are often used interchangeably, within the community sector, there exists a particular and familiar meaning for each.

A ‘strategy’ is used as the primary method for an individual, group, or organisation to successfully achieve stated goals or objectives. Strategies are usually used as a set of tools to coordinate a series of related parties and activities committed to achieving stated outcomes.

Policy typically refers to an agencies commitment to a stated course of action in an effort to promote consistency, remove ambiguity and achieve the desired result. Policy is used by government departments as the preferred course of action to direct decisions and associated responses in pursuit of intended outcomes. It is the overarching statement that drives strategic directions. Strategies should be developed in accordance with the policy settings of Governments.

**International Influences**

International policy influences have an impact on what we do locally. In particular, the United Nations policy agenda which provides the community sector and government with directions and drivers for change. There are various international conventions and frameworks available to assist in identifying health and wellbeing benchmarks, for developing improvement strategies and for measuring successes. The United Nations, World Health Organisation and World Bank websites provide a wealth of information and useful resources for positive community and social planning purposes.

**Legislation**

It should be recognised that changing attitudes and community expectations can also directly influence government policy. Often governments recognise the legitimacy of changing social contexts through legislative reform, which occurs at the State and Federal level. In line with changing social contexts, anti- discrimination, equal opportunity, the prevention of bullying and harassment and universal access principles, have all made their way into legislation over the past few decades. For this reason, the importance of legislation and the impact it has on both community sector operations and resourcing is imperative to anticipate, discuss and collectively understand.

This overview recognises the abovementioned dynamics in its aim to make sense of the social inclusion policy context that the community services sector operates within. While it is not intended to be an exhaustive description of the current policy landscape, it is hoped that the social inclusion policy overview will provide some informative support to the CSSR project.
Report Structure

For ease of reference, the policy overview has been divided into two parts.

**Part One** looks at social inclusion policy agendas more broadly in relation to:
- The International policy framework;
- The three levels of government—National, State and Local, and;
- Community sector peak bodies

**Part Two** provides more detailed information in relation to International policy, National and State policy agendas, if applicable. This discussion is organised through several social inclusion related focus areas, including:
- Health and ageing
- People with disability and carers
- People experiencing homelessness
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Young people
- Disaster recovery and resilience
- Early years and family

In organising the policy overview by focus areas, the intention is to assist reader useability in allowing select perusal of the discussion as per area of interest or profession.
Part One

This section presents an outline of the broad level social inclusion related policy frameworks from different levels of government (summarised below in Table One). It also provides an overview of the community sector related peak body policy influencers and their role in the sector.

Table One – Policy Overview Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Level</th>
<th>Included in this level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>Discussion of United Nations policy frameworks, charters and principles and benchmarks such as Liveability Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Summary of the role of the Australian Commonwealth Governments policy agenda, which is realised through COAG Agreements and Strategy lead by community government strategy agendas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Government</td>
<td>Discussion of the commitments articulated in the various COAG Agreements and additional strategic State government directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>Summary of varied policy agendas in line with the diversity of planning, regulatory and service delivery functions of Local Government.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

International Policy Context

The Australian social inclusion policy agenda is significantly influenced by international dynamics. While certain instantly recognisable international organisations work with Australian governments in relation to their humanitarian agendas, Australian policy leaders often elect to adopt international coordinating frameworks and indicators.

For the purposes of this discussion, the United Nations organisations most relevant to the field of social inclusion include:

- The World Health Organisation (WHO);
- The United Nations (UN);
- The United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO);
- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and;
- The World Bank (WB).

An array of social inclusion related international frameworks have been adopted across Australia, often forming the backbone to effective health and social planning at the Local, Regional State and Commonwealth Government levels. By way of a brief summary, the WHO focus on health; the UN focus on peace keeping and development outcomes; the UNESCO focus on education, science and culture; the UNICEF focus on children, and; the WB focus on reducing poverty and, more recently, disaster management.
The National Policy Context

The role of the Australian Government is principally established under Section 51 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act. While Australia is a federation consisting of a Commonwealth Government and eight State and Territory governments, the variety of roles for the levels of Government are administered by the various agency arrangements, which include Legal, Taxation & Excise, Families and Social welfare, Customs & Quarantine, Immigration, postal services and the relevant education, health and industry program agendas (i.e. education revolution, Closing the Gap, Sustainability, Job Revolution).

As well as services and programs administered by the separate agencies and departments, most of the National government reform agenda is delivered through intergovernmental agreements known as Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Agreements and National Partnership Agreements.

Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia, comprised of the Prime Minister (the Chair), State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

The role of COAG is to initiate, develop and monitor the implementation of policy reforms that are of national significance and those that require cooperative action by Australian governments.

The February 2006 Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting undertook to collaboratively deliver a substantial new National Reform Agenda embracing human capital, competition and regulatory reform streams. The National Reform Agenda (NRA) aims to further raise living standards and improve services by lifting the nation's productivity and workforce participation over the next decade. The NRA looks to firm up practical initiatives in the areas of improved health services, skills recognition, infrastructure regulation and planning, a lessened regulatory burden on business and the identification of mental health as an issue of national significance. The NRA also focuses on national pandemic preparedness, counter-terrorism and bio-fuels.

COAG Agreements

COAG Agreement Frameworks and associated strategies reflect Australian Government policy agendas.

A range of COAG imperatives have been developed. Current Agreements, Policy outcomes and deliverables include the broad policy areas of:

- Nation Building and Jobs;
- Disaster Resilience;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes;
- Housing and Homelessness outcomes;
- Health & Disability;
- Early Years, Education & Family and;
In addition to COAG Agreements, which articulate State and National government partnership responsibilities, Australian government departments and related policy agendas articulate their vision for various social and community outcomes. In the 2011 ‘Making a Difference’ statement, the Gillard Government has reiterated its commitment to working hard to build a strong economy, a sustainable environment and a fair society that provides opportunity and looks after the vulnerable (www.alp.org.au). A key aspect of that policy platform is the Australian Government’s Social Inclusion Agenda.

The Social Inclusion Agenda
The Australian Government’s vision for a socially inclusive society aims to create an Australia where everyone feels valued and has the opportunity to participate fully in life and society. The social inclusion agenda is a whole-of-government approach to address disadvantage and reduce social exclusion by building capacity in communities; with a focus on disadvantaged groups. This agenda recognises the critical role the community sector plays in delivering services, advising on and developing social policy and advocating for and on behalf of marginalised groups. The social inclusion agenda is a cross-jurisdictional approach and a strong relationship between the government and the sector is crucial to its success.

The social inclusion agenda is supported by the Social Inclusion Board, the National Compact and the Office for the Not for Profit Sector. The collective involvement of these agencies reflects the governments’ commitment to the not-for-profit sector. Please peruse www.socialinclusion.gov.au for further information.

In 2009, the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) identified several priority areas of focus. DEEWR identified priority employment areas as their focus, while FaHCSIA identified social inclusion as a focus. Both departments share the same geographical target areas nationally, and have identified six priority areas in Queensland. The ‘Caboolture–Sunshine Coast’ priority area, which includes the Caboolture South, is the sole target area within the Moreton Bay region.

The National Compact
One outcome of the Gillard Government’s social inclusion agenda has been the development of a ‘National Compact’ between the Australian Government and the not-for-profit sector. The National Compact: working together is an agreement between the Australian Government and the not-for-profit sector to find new and better ways of working together based on mutual trust, respect and collaboration (www.nationalcompact.gov.au).

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Moreton Bay
Regional Development Australia Committees are funded to build partnerships between governments, regional development organisations, local businesses, community groups and key regional stakeholders to provide strategic and targeted responses to economic, environmental and social issues affecting the regions of Australia.

RDA Moreton Bay’s Regional Roadmap articulates the Committee’s economic, environmental and social vision for the region, and underpins the work and priorities of the committee. It sets out the economic, environmental and social vision for the region, articulate the drivers for change, identifies strengths, weaknesses and priorities, which the RDA Committee believes are priorities for action (http://www.rdamoretonbay.org.au).

The State Government Policy Context
Department of Communities
The Queensland Government’s commitment to social inclusion is principally delivered through the Department of Communities. Following machinery-of-government changes in March 2009, a number of former Queensland Government departments and entities were brought together to form the new Department. The Queensland Department of Communities was created specifically to deliver services that contribute to building fair, cohesive and vibrant communities in Queensland and to promote positive community outcomes.

The Department of Communities is a key driver of integrated community service delivery and the major state government contributor to social inclusion and community development across Queensland, especially for women, children, families, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, seniors, young people, people with a disability, people with a mental illness, volunteers, carers, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. The department also actively promotes community participation by funding integrated services for individuals and families who experience disadvantage.

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA)
QRA is a newly established organisation involved in disaster management policy development.

The Local Government Policy Context

Moreton Bay Regional Council (MBRC)
The three amalgamated Councils (including prior Caboolture, Pine Rivers and Redcliffe districts) had developed numerous policies and directives aligned with previous local government boundaries. Over time, these policies will be reviewed to reflect the aspirations of the Moreton Bay region community. Local Government authorities play varying planning, regulatory and service delivery roles, which are reflected in policy agendas. Generally, some of these social inclusion related areas of Local Government include:

- Coordination and provision of numerous community services and facilities;
- Social planning and research;
- Rating recessions,
- Community engagement;
- Social procurement;
- Land management planning;
- Cultural development,
- Provision of local and regional infrastructure;
- Community development;
- Disaster management, and;
- Community Grants, Partnerships and Collaborations.

Through these roles and functions, Council influences the social inclusion policy agenda by developing internal policy and directives and by playing an advocacy role in regards to the policy and strategies of other levels of government.

Sector Development
The CSSR project will assist Council to reshape the community development unit’s operations to ensure alignment with the needs of the community sector and assist the most responsive and
effective use of Council resources in support of the sector. At the initiation of the CSSR project, Council’s Community Development Unit (CDU) pursued a sector development approach through:

- Capacity building training workshop provision
- Interagency network facilitation
- Coordinating and facilitating the implementation of pilot community development projects
- Community grant provision
- Social inclusion related community event facilitation i.e. disability, seniors and refugee week
- Social planning and policy development and advocacy

The abovementioned operations are a collection of the prior Council’s (before MBRC amalgamation) community development endeavours. The CSSR project will help the CDU to reorganise its work to better assist the development of a sustainable community services sector for the region.

As identified in the Social Inclusion Profile, the Moreton Bay region is one of the fastest growing regions within Australia. Within this context, it is reasonable to expect substantial community change and corresponding challenges and priority areas requiring attention and coordinated response. Accordingly, the CSSR project is a mechanism for dialogue between the community services sector and various levels of government for understanding and best responding to the opportunities of the future.

Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)

While the LGAQ has been in existence since 1896, the Local Government Act 2009 has given the Association a more directive role in influencing social and community policy. As per local government act requirements, there is now an increased emphasis on planning and accountability, requiring every council to develop a long term community plan. The Act also emphasises the need for local government authorities to invest in citizen and community engagement. As a legislative principle, community engagement is required in all council processes and across all council business, including the development of the Long Term Community Plan. Specifically, The Act states that local government must ensure ‘transparent and effective processes and decision making in the public interest’ and ‘democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement’.

The LGAQ provides a policy development arm for the local government authorities across Queensland. In relation to social inclusion policy agendas, the LGAQ are currently drafting a Community Wellbeing Policy for local government. The draft Queensland local government Community Wellbeing Policy positions peoples’ social wellbeing as central to their quality of life and aims to include the measurement of wellbeing in Queensland communities in social planning processes. Through a variety of means, the LGAQ advocates for and promotes social inclusion as an outcome for policy development.

The Council of Mayors South East Queensland

In recognition of South East Queensland (SEQ), the nations’ fastest growing region, the council of Mayors was established in September 2005. It exists as an independent political advocacy organisation and provides a vehicle for elevating SEQ issues in the political arena.

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) aims to influence Commonwealth and State government policy and funding priorities. It includes regional and city councils from the Gold Coast in the south to
the Sunshine Coast in the north and west to Toowoomba. Moreton Bay Regional Council participates in the Council of Mayors.
Community Sector Peak Agencies: Key Policy Influencers

Numerous community sector peak agencies influence the social inclusion policy agenda, some of which include:

Australian Youth Affairs Coalition
A non-government youth affairs peak body which supports and represents young people and the youth sector on youth issues. Key initiatives for this body include:

- Fostering good practice in youth engagement and participation, and ensuring young people’s voices are heard in national debates;
- Developing policy positions around identified priorities affecting, or of interest to, the youth sector and young people; and
- Undertaking youth sector development work through the promotion of and use of evidence based research and partnerships.

Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)
QCOSS provides a voice for Queenslanders affected by poverty and inequality (www.qcoss.org.au). As the peak agency for community services in Queensland, QCOSS provides the lead on issues of significance to the social, health and community sectors statewide. QCOSS also has a national role and contributes to the national voice on community issues through its membership with the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and the nation-wide network of state and territory Councils (the COSS’s).

QCOSS influences social inclusion related policy via a range of functions, currently including Policy Advocacy, Sector Development, and Community and Member Engagement, as identified in the 2011-2013 Strategic Plan. In the delivery of their strategies and Plans QCOSS hosts or participates in a number of forums, policy roundtables and the annual QCOSS Conference. QCOSS regional forums offer opportunities to reflect on and discuss key regional issues with sector colleagues, and ensure QCOSS remains aware of those issues most important to the sector in the region.

The Council on the Ageing (COTA)
COTA is Australia’s leading seniors’ organisation, including a membership of individual members and seniors’ related organisations in all States and Territories. COTA is an independent consumer organisation run by and for senior Australians, protecting and promoting the well-being of all seniors.

National Disability Services Queensland (NDS QLD)
NDS QLD is the peak disability service provider agency in Queensland. Through the provision of information, representation and policy advice, NDS promotes and advances services which support people with all forms of disability to participate in all domains of life.

Queensland Shelter (QS)
QS is the peak organisation promoting improved access to housing for all Queenslanders.

The Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Human Services Coalition
The Coalition is committed to the reform of the human services system in Queensland to ensure the delivery of comprehensive, effective and integrated human services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In addition, by identifying key human services issues facing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, it is committed to improve the quality of life for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ) promotes multiculturalism and represents the interests of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) who are residing in Queensland. ECCQ is a member-based state-wide peak body and contributes to national policy and debate on all matters concerning ethnic communities. It also influences policy through its affiliation with the Canberra-based Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia.

Youth Affairs Network Queensland (YANQ)
YANQ is the peak body for community youth affairs organisations in Queensland and represents individuals and organisations from Queensland’s youth sector.

Early Childhood Australia, Queensland (ECA QLD)
ECA QLD advocates to ensure quality, social justice and equity in all issues relating to the education and care of children from birth to eight years.

Playgroup Queensland
Playgroup Queensland supports communities, families and children through quality and safe play based experiences by offering an extensive state-wide network of community and facilitated playgroups, early intervention services and toy libraries. With its family focused approach to working with parents and children, Playgroup Queensland services have a role in policy advocacy in relation to parenting issues and in building child and family friendly communities.
Part Two

This part provides more detail in relation to each level of governments’ social inclusion policy framework. Each social inclusion related focus area will be discussed against the International, National and State policy frameworks. It is important to note the interrelated nature of the social inclusion focus areas and that working towards social inclusion requires progress across each of the identified focus areas.

Healthy Ageing

This section focuses on Policies, Strategies and Action Plans that identify National and State government policy directions in relation to the healthy ageing of our residents. Also included in this topic area is the emerging priority policy and strategy area of mental health.

‘Healthy Ageing’ as a concept refers to the health management of all sectors and age-groups of our society; it incorporates an interventionist and preventative approach to health issues in later life. As such, seniors.gov.au defines healthy ageing as:

‘the ongoing activities and behaviours you undertake to reduce the risk of illness and disease and increase your physical, emotional and mental health. It also means combating illness and disease with some basic lifestyle realignment that can result in a faster and more enduring recovery’.

In this context, Healthy Ageing incorporates the full spectrum of health and preventative health issues, including; alcohol and drug use; physical activity levels; healthy eating; mental health; men, women and child related issues; youth and family health; managing chronic disease (such as diabetes and access to health), and; recreational and public services. It also encompasses participation in social and recreational activities and safe, positive engagement with the broader community.

International Policy Frameworks

World Health Organisation (WHO)

The WHO has developed coordination frameworks to support healthy and active ageing social planning. The WHO adopted the term ‘active ageing’ to convey strength based messages, and in recognition of the human rights of older people and the United Nations principles of independence, participation, dignity, care and self-fulfilment. The WHO’s approach recognises the rights of people to equality of opportunity and treatment in all aspects of life as they grow older. Moreover, the WHO’s approach supports individual responsibility in exercising participation in the political process and other aspects of community life and for continuing opportunities for health, participation and security. The WHO has adopted the term ‘active ageing’ to depict ‘the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age’ (www.who.int).

Both the WHO Active Ageing Policy Framework and Age Friendly Cities Guides have gained wide acceptance in the positive health and ageing services and planning arena’s internationally. Active ageing applies to both individuals and population groups. It encourages people to realise their potential for physical, social, and mental wellbeing throughout the course of their lives and to participate in society according to their needs, desires and capacities. These frameworks also provide adequate protection, security and care when assistance is required. Furthermore, these frameworks encourage continued community participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs.

The WHO has identified that there are key physical, social and services attributes of age-friendly urban settings, regional centres and towns. ‘Age friendly’ societies benefit people of all ages, not just the elderly, and are inclusive rather than inflexible. ‘Age Friendliness’ refers not
only to public services which are well lit, well maintained and accessible, but also covers an array of day to day realities. Various age friendly resource links can be obtained at the references list.

The National Government Policy Context

Healthy Ageing
The Australian Government, through the Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA), sets national health policies and subsidises health services provided by state and territory governments and the private sector. This level of government funds universal medical services and pharmaceuticals and gives financial assistance to public hospitals, residential aged care facilities and home and community care for the aged. It also funds health research and provides support for training health professionals, including providing financial assistance to tertiary students (www.health.gov.au and www.dfat.gov.au).

The COAG imperatives relevant to social inclusion for healthy ageing include the National Partnership Agreements on Hospital and Health Workforce Reform, Preventive Health, and to a degree, the National Disability Agreement.

Of particular relevance to the healthy ageing agenda is the National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre Research and Education Program, which is underpinned by the following five principles:
1. Broaden the focus on ageing, from dependency and illness to quality of life and well being
2. Ensure high quality and innovative research to emphasise the positive aspects of ageing
3. Recognise the value of older people and their contribution, not only to the economy but also to their families and communities, both individually and as a whole
4. Promote consumer-oriented research which is responsive to the needs of National Seniors Australia members and benefits all older people, and
5. Broadly disseminate knowledge gained through research, with a view to informing social inclusion in the community.

Over recent years, an emphasis has emerged on the mental health of individuals as a key driver in regards to social inclusion, participation and on ageing positively.

Mental Health
The National government coordinates the mental health social inclusion agenda as part of various strategies, including the:
- COAG National Mental Health Plan;
- National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy;
- Disability Assistance Package;
- Helping Children with Autism, and;
- Homelessness initiatives.

The State Government Policy Context

Healthy Ageing
In Queensland, the Department of Communities, through the Office for Seniors plays a lead role across government for ageing and older people's issues. The Office for Seniors shares this responsibility with other relevant government agencies, including health, housing, disability and transport. The office works in partnership with other government departments, seniors' organisations, service providers and academia, to develop programs to respond to the needs of
seniors. The Office for Seniors works to ensure the needs, interests and concerns of seniors are heard and responded to through initiatives that include:

**Toward Q2: Tomorrow’s Queensland** is the State government’s vision for 2020. It identifies our growing population and the increased demand on hospitals as a priority area requiring response.

**The Positively Ageless** strategy is a long-term vision to 2020 for Queensland seniors. It includes an Action Plan for 2010-12 focusing on:

- Valuing and empowering seniors;
- Improving health and wellbeing;
- Promoting workforce participation, independence and mobility;
- Providing information and improving communication, and;
- Supporting community participation and age friendly communities.

The Strategy encourages volunteering, focusing on inclusiveness and providing services to the most vulnerable seniors ([http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/communityservices/community-services](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/communityservices/community-services)).

**Cross Government Project to Reduce Social Isolation of Older People** was established to identify and develop innovative responses to reduce the social isolation of seniors. It describes social isolation as a low level of interaction with others combined with the experience of loneliness which can have a detrimental impact on health and wellbeing. This project also acknowledges the importance of older people having the opportunity to be socially connected and the choice to participate in community life, if, and when they wish.

**Mental Health**
On 14 July 2006, the Queensland Government announced its initial contribution of $366.2m to the COAG National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006-2011 (NAP). This was succeeded in 2007 by a 10 year plan - The Queensland Plan for Mental Health 2007-2017, which outlines the Queensland Government’s plan to reform and improve mental health services over the next ten years (finalising in 2017.)

This Plan challenges the government, the private sector, and non-government organisations to work collaboratively to provide recovery-oriented, consumer-focused mental health services which:

- Promote mental health and wellbeing;
- Where possible prevent mental health problems and mental illness;
- Reduce the impact of mental illness on individuals, their families and the community;
- Promote recovery and build resilience, and;
- Enable people who live with a mental illness to participate meaningfully in society.


Additional, the State government’s vision for 2020 ‘Toward Q2: Tomorrow’s Queensland’ identifies a commitment towards national reforms in relation to mental health and community care (under National Health Reforms).
People with Disability and Carers

This section focuses on Policies, Programs and Action Plans which reflect National and State government directions in relation to social inclusion and people with a disability and carers.

International Policy Frameworks

United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

CRPD was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2006 and came into force on the 3rd of May 2008.

The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

The Principles of the Convention include:

a. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons;
b. Non-discrimination;
c. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
d. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
e. Equality of opportunity;
f. Accessibility;
g. Equality between men and women, and;
h. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

Although existing human rights conventions offer considerable potential to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities, in many circumstances, this potential has been under exploited. The CRPD was adopted in response and to further advance the position of people with disabilities. It was also adopted in response to the fact that many people with disabilities continue to be denied human rights and are kept on the margins of society across many parts of the World. The Convention sets out the legal obligations of Nation States in promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. A key aspect of the Convention is that it responds to the need to ensure the inclusion of people with disability into broader social and economic participation (Article 3, United Nations CRPD, 2006).

Principally, the Convention recognises that people with a disability have inherent rights, and that they are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as active members of society (cited, www.ds-int.org).

World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank

Working to achieve a stated vision for an inclusive world in which all are able to live a life of health, comfort, and dignity, the WHO and the World Bank Group jointly produced the 2011 re-release of the World Report on Disability. The World Report aims to provide the evidence for innovative policies and programmes that can improve the lives of people with disabilities, and facilitate implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This convention is a landmark international treaty which reinforces the understanding of disability as a human right and as a development priority.

The World Report on Disability includes the first update of the WHO's disability prevalence estimates for more than thirty years and suggests steps for all stakeholders – including governments, civil society organisations and organisations for people with a disability – to benefit people with a disability and the wider community. This can be achieved through the creation of enabling environments, the development of rehabilitation and support services,
ensuring adequate social protection, creating inclusive policies and programmes, and enforcing new and existing standards and legislation (WHO World Report on Disability).

The National Government Policy Context

Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

In November 2009, the Prime Minister announced the development of a National Disability Strategy through the COAG and an inquiry into a National Disability Insurance Scheme, or similar scheme, as part of this Strategy. This Strategy results from a nation-wide public consultation process, involving over 2,500 people, and formal endorsement by COAG on the 13 of February, 2011.

Although formally released in February 2011, work on a sustainable financial future continues through ongoing activities, such as the:

- Productivity Commission Inquiry, and;
- The National Disability and Carer Alliance (NDIS) campaign.

National Disability Strategy

The National Disability Strategy represents a commitment by all levels of government, industry and the community to a unified, national approach to disability related policy and program development. This new approach will assist in addressing the challenges faced by Australians with disability, their families and carers, both now and into the future.

The Strategy is a ten year plan that sets out six priority areas for action to improve the lives of people with disabilities, their families and carers. These priority areas include:

**Inclusive and Accessible Communities**—the physical environment including public transport; parks, buildings and housing; digital information and communications technologies, and; civic life, including social, sporting, recreational and cultural life.

**Rights Protection, Justice and Legislation**—statutory protections such as anti-discrimination measures; complaints mechanisms; advocacy; and the electoral and justice systems.

**Economic Security**—jobs; business opportunities; financial independence; adequate income support for those not able to work, and; housing.

**Personal and Community Support**—inclusion and participation in the community; person-centered care and support provided by specialist disability services and mainstream services and; informal care and support.

**Learning and Skills** — early childhood education and care, schools, further education, vocational education and, transitions from education to employment and life-long learning.

**Health and Wellbeing** — health services, health promotion and the interaction between health, disability systems and, wellbeing and enjoyment of life.

The National Disability Strategy guides public policy across governments and aims to bring about change in all mainstream services and programs as well as community infrastructure. It is the first time the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments have agreed to such a wide ranging set of directions for disability (www.fahcsia.gov.au).
The State Government Policy Context

Disability Service Provision
The governing framework for the provision of disability services in Queensland is delivered through the Disability Services Act (Qld) 2006. The Act has been updated and expanded and reaffirms that people with a disability have the same rights as all other members of the Queensland community. Departmental Strategies delivered in accordance with the Act include:

Disability Service Plans
The Act requires every Queensland Government department to develop a Disability Service Plan. The Plans describe the way each department is working towards providing appropriate services and facilities for people with a disability, their families and carers. The various plans identify:

- Issues regarding service delivery by government departments for people with a disability
- The way these issues will be addressed
- How the department's plan complements the work of other plans.

Each plan is unique, reflecting the size, scope and activities of the department to which it relates.

In 2011 the Queensland Government, Department of Communities, released its first three year whole of government action plan for disability service provision. The ‘Absolutely everybody: enabling Queenslanders with disability plan’ 2011-14 sets out a blueprint for change with priorities and strategies to improve access and participation for Queenslanders with disability in all aspects of life including transport, education, health care, employment, sports and recreation, arts and culture and in the delivery of disability.

Positive Futures
The Positive Futures Strategy aims to support people with an intellectual or cognitive disability who exhibit severely challenging behaviours to live as independently and as meaningfully as possible.

Growing Stronger
The Growing Stronger strategy aims to build a better disability service system through reforms that produce simpler, fairer and more transparent access to specialist disability services in Queensland.

Carer Recognition Policy
The Queensland Government Carer Recognition Policy recognises the significant contribution carers make to our Queensland community. The Policy reflects the commitment of the government to fostering understanding within the community of the issues and challenges facing carers in Queensland. It recognises that helping carers is one of the best ways to also help the people they care for and to ensure the inclusion and ongoing participation of both the carers and those for whom they care. The Companion Card and Carers Business Discount card are also aimed at supporting carers and encouraging their active inclusion.
People experiencing Homelessness

This section focuses on Policies, Programs and Action Plans which reflect National and State government directions in relation to social inclusion and people experiencing homelessness.

International Policy Frameworks

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
The economic, social and cultural right to adequate housing and shelter is recognised in the UDHR and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The right to housing is guaranteed as part of the right to an adequate standard of living under Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (cited in Edgar, B, Doherty, J & Meert, H 2002, pg 17).

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
According to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the aspects of the right to housing under the ICESCR include; legal security of tenure; availability of services; materials; facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location and cultural adequacy.

UN HABITAT
The right to adequate housing was a key issue at the 1996 Habitat meeting in Istanbul and a main theme in the Istanbul Agreement and Habitat Agenda. The Agenda identifies the steps required by governments to ‘promote, protect and ensure the full and progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing’. The 2001 Habitat meeting reaffirmed the 1996 Agenda and established the UN Human Settlement Program to promote the right to housing in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Known as ‘UN–HABITAT’, the program is an important international forum for the right to housing and is tasked with promoting housing rights through awareness campaigns, and the development of benchmarks and monitoring systems (cited in Edgar et al., 2002, pg 17).

The National Government Policy Context

In alignment with the Global Financial Crisis timeframe, homelessness in Australia reached unheard of levels. Significantly contributing to increasing homelessness rates included shortages in available housing in some areas and a lack of affordable housing in many areas for those on restricted incomes. Homelessness and an inability to access affordable and appropriately located housing are leading causes of social “exclusion”. The Australian Government responses to homelessness and affordable housing are channelled through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

The COAG imperatives on addressing homelessness and affordable housing in Australia are delivered through the National Partnership Agreements, which include:

1. National Affordable Housing Agreement (the NAHA);
2. Social Housing, and;
3. Homelessness.

1. National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA)
NAHA aims to ensure that all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing that contributes to social and economic participation (www.fahcsia.gov.au).
As discussed in further detail below, the key NAHA initiatives include:

- Increasing support for people in public and private rental housing;
- Increased support to the Reconnect Program;
- ‘No exits into homelessness’ from statutory, custodial and health services;
- Establishing 90 Community Engagement Officers to improve access to Centrelink services, and;
- Building an additional 2,700 public and community housing properties.

2. Social Housing Initiative
Social housing characteristics have evolved through the integration of the former “public housing” and “community housing” tenures and includes:

- Integration of public and community housing waiting lists.
- Better social and economic participation for social housing tenants by locating housing closer to transport, services and employment opportunities.
- Implementation of support arrangements to assist social housing tenants to transition from social housing arrangements to affordable private rental and home ownership as their circumstances change, and;
- Reducing concentrations of disadvantage through appropriate redevelopment to create mixed communities that improve social inclusion.

3. Homelessness
Homelessness initiatives include those programs & services which focus on reducing the incidence of homelessness among Australians, which include:

- **National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness**
  The agreement assists people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion.

- **National Homelessness Strategy (NHS)**
  From 1999, the NHS has provided leadership in developing approaches for the prevention and reduction of homelessness and established new ground in integrated service delivery for people who are vulnerable to homelessness.

**State Government Policy Context**

As a COAG participant, the Queensland Department of Communities is a signatory to the National Partnership Agreements on Social Housing, Affordable Housing (the NAHA), and on Homelessness. As previously indicated, the NAHA is supported by the National Partnership Agreements on Social Housing and on Homelessness.

The National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing coordinates the Queensland Government contributions to achieving outcomes such as:

- People being able to rent housing that meets their needs;
- People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieving sustainable housing and social inclusion, and;
- Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples having improved housing amenity and reduced overcrowding.
Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Communities

This section focuses on Policies, Programs and Action Plans which reflect Commonwealth and State government directions in relation to social inclusion and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

International Policy Frameworks

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted in September 2007.

Some of the elements of the UN Declaration include:
- **Affirming** that indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such,
- **Affirming also** that all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilisations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind,
- **Affirming further** that all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust,
- **Reaffirming** that indigenous peoples, in the exercise of their rights, should be free from discrimination of any kind,
- **Concerned** that indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonisation and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests,
- **Recognising** the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources,
- **Recognising also** the urgent need to respect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples affirmed in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements with States.

(Cited United Nations, web site sub page)

The National Government Policy Context

On the 20th December 2007, COAG, which included the leaders of Commonwealth, State and Territory, and local Governments, committed to closing the gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Importantly, COAG agreed to be accountable for reaching this goal within a specific timeframe. This strategy has become known as “Closing the Gap”.

‘Closing the Gap’ includes the following key targets relevant to social inclusion and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage:
1. Closing the life expectancy gap within a generation;
2. Halving the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade (by 2018);
3. At least halving the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020, and;
The National government drives the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reform agenda, which is largely coordinated via the consensus reached with the States and Territories through National Partnership Agreements.

**National Partnership Agreements on Closing the Gap**

On the 13th of May 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed on a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific National Partnership Agreements. These agreements commit governments to a common framework of outcomes, progress measures and policy directions to guide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reform, to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health issues and to increase the economic and social participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Included among the Agreements are the:

- National Partnership on Closing the Gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Outcomes
- Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Development and
- National Partnership on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economic Participation.

Additionally, broader national agreements for mainstream funding and service delivery have a strong focus on improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes.

**The State Government Policy Context**

The 2007/08 Queensland Closing the Gap Report identified significant gaps between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across almost all of the indicators associated with the COAG targets. The report also showed that, more often than not, the level of disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was greater in the remote regions of the state and in the discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities than in major cities (Closing the Gap).

The six 'Closing the Gap' targets link in with Queensland government strategic areas for action, a number of which link directly to the social inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These targets include:

**Early childhood** — The Queensland Government's priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children include improving child and maternal health care; supporting good parenting, and; strengthening early childhood education and care.

**Schooling**—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students should have the same opportunities for employment and further study as non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The Queensland Government's priority is to address the gap in employment outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This goal is being pursued through investment in public services and infrastructure, enterprise support, tourism promotion and facilities, trade and industry programs and training and employment programs.

**Safe Communities**—all people have the right to live in safety, particularly in their own homes and communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more likely to be victims of and/or involved in crime. They are more likely to be the subject of child protection intervention and to be incarcerated as adults and juveniles.

The Queensland Government's priorities for creating safe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities include:
- Addressing the problem of violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities;
- Reducing the harms caused by alcohol and other substance use;
- Preventing and dealing with criminal and other anti-social behaviours;
- Protecting children from neglect and abuse, and;
- Supporting volunteering by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Land and culture—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders have, as first peoples, long histories of strong kinship, strength and pride in culture. They also have a special relationship with place, land, waters and sea which has endured for thousands of years. The Queensland Government seeks to promote and affirm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to create access to, and management of, land and sea as a base for wellbeing and cultural affirmation and to provide a firm basis for community participation (www.communities.qld.gov.au).

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS)—ATSIS is part of the Department of Communities. It leads and facilitates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy, engagement and service delivery.

ATSIS works with all levels of government and the community to:
- Close the Gap in advantage and disadvantage between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders;
- Affirm and Promote the distinct cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their contributions to Queensland and Australia;
- Provide Practical Help and Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in realising their capabilities and aspirations, and;
- Advance Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other Queenslanders.
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities

This section focuses on Policies, Programs and Action Plans which reflect National and State government directions in relation to social inclusion and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

International Policy Frameworks

The United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

The convention defines a refugee and identifies the rights of those that have been granted asylum and the responsibilities of the accepting nation state. Refugees are legally defined as ‘people who are outside their countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, and who cannot or do not want to return home’.

In addition, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights acknowledges that every person has inherent dignity and value.

The National Government Policy Context

The Australian Government commitment to a Multicultural Australia is evident in its adoption of a Multicultural Policy. Multiculturalism is acknowledged as being in Australia’s national interest in the pursuit of the principles of fairness and inclusion. This policy aims to enhance respect and support for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity and embraces shared values and cultural traditions.

Australia’s Multicultural Policy 2011 outlines the following key elements:

A) The establishment of the Australian Multicultural Council (AMC) which acts as an independent champion for a multicultural nation. The AMC also holds a formal role in strengthening the access and equity strategy and it holds a research advisory role on multicultural policy.

B) The development of the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy between the Department of Immigration & Citizenship, the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Race Discrimination Commissioner, FaHCSIA, the AMC and the Attorney-General’s department. The partnership consults extensively with non government organisations in the design, development and implementation of the strategy. The strategy incorporates research and consultation; education resourcing; public awareness; youth engagement, and; ongoing evaluation.

C) A Strengthening Access and Equity focus, which aims to increase governmental program and service responsiveness to Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

D) Multicultural Arts and Festival Grants, which prioritises diversity and social cohesion by including the provision of funding for multicultural arts and festivals.

The State Government Policy Context

The Queensland government recognises multicultural diversity as a positive contribution for the state. The 2011 Multicultural Policy is the Queensland Government’s vision and agenda for the state, includes the following key themes:

- Multicultural recognition legislation;
- Language, information and communication;
- Improving service delivery;
- Regional and emerging communities;
- Skills, jobs and enterprise, and;
- Inclusive communities.

**The Queensland Multicultural Action Plan 2011 – 14** aims to increase:
- The cultural competence of staff;
- Access to interpreters for clients when accessing services;
- Communication and engagement with culturally linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and/or organisations, and;
- Recruitment and retention strategies for staff from CALD backgrounds.
Young People

This section focuses on Policies, Programs and Action Plans which reflect Commonwealth and State government directions in relation to social inclusion and young people.

International Policy Frameworks

The terms ‘young people’ and ‘youth’ generally refers to people aged between 12-25 years and unlike other age cohorts (e.g. Ageing and Children), no specific International Conventions refer exclusively to the protection of the rights of young people. The rights of young people are included in the ‘Human Rights’ Charter and partly addressed by the Rights of the Child. In addition to these, there is an international set of guidelines for the ‘Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency’.

Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is acknowledged that every person has inherent dignity and value. Human rights help us to recognise and respect that fundamental worth in ourselves and in each other.

Please note, the ‘Rights of the Child’ are explored in the ‘Early Years and Family’ section of the document.

The United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines)

The following Guidelines which remain relevant today, were proclaimed by the United Nations in December 1990:

- The successful prevention of juvenile delinquency requires efforts on the part of the entire society to ensure the harmonious development of adolescents, with respect for and promotion of their personality from early childhood
- A child-centred orientation should be pursued. Young persons should have an active role and partnership within society and should not be considered as mere objects of socialization or control
- The well-being of young persons from their early childhood should be the focus of any preventive programme
- Progressive delinquency prevention policies measures should be recognized. Such policies and measures should involve:
  a. The provision of opportunities, in particular educational opportunities, to meet the varying needs of young persons and to serve as a supportive framework for safeguarding the personal development of all young persons, particularly those who are demonstrably endangered or at social risk and are in need of special care and protection;
  b. Specialised philosophies and approaches for delinquency prevention, on the basis of laws, processes, institutions, facilities and a service delivery network aimed at reducing the motivation, need and opportunity for, or conditions giving rise to, the commission of infractions;
  c. Official intervention to be pursued primarily in the overall interest of the young person and guided by fairness and equity;
  d. Safeguarding the well-being, development, rights and interests of all young persons;
- Community-based services and programmes should be developed for the prevention of juvenile delinquency.
Social policy—
- Government agencies should give high priority to plans and programs for young persons and should provide sufficient funds and other resources for the effective delivery of services, facilities and staff for adequate medical and mental health care, nutrition, housing and other relevant services, including drug and alcohol abuse prevention and treatment, ensuring that such resources reach and actually benefit young persons.
- Government agencies should provide young persons with the opportunity of continuing in full-time education, funded by the State where parents or guardians are unable to support the young persons, and of receiving work experience.
- Participation in plans and programmes should be voluntary. Young persons themselves should be involved in their formulation, development and implementation.

Among the sections delineated in the Guideline are included: Fundamental principles; Family; Education; Community; Mass media; Social policy; Research, policy development and coordination; Socialization processes. A number of these contain clauses of specific relevance to social inclusion (adapted from the United Nations, Documents web site).

The National Government Policy Context

Australia has agreed to uphold the human rights standards set out in a number of international treaties and declarations, including:
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Both the Convention and the Declaration have been discussed previously in this document.

A number of National initiatives contribute to social inclusion related policy for young people, including:

**The Youth Compact**, which was announced in May 2009 and includes a range of measures to strengthen the education, training opportunities and support for young people. The Compact with Young Australians has three elements to i) promote skills acquisition, ii) ensure young people are learning or iii) earning ([www.deewr.gov.au/Youth](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth)).

**National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions**, which is a COAG Agreement for young people that seeks to:
- Achieve a 90 per cent Year 12 or equivalent rate by 2015;
- Ensure that young people are in receipt of and engage better with education or training;
- Ensure that young people transition from school into further education, training or employment successfully, and;
- Align National and State youth programs related to careers and transitions.

This Agreement is underpinned by the Youth Compact.

**The Office for Youth** contribute to policy dialogue by delivering a range of reports, such as:
- Investing in Australia’s young people
- State of Australia’s Young People
- Effective Communication with Young People
Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System
The National Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations developed the *Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System* (TAHES) initiative in response to the release of the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education Report. The TAHES initiative includes a number of activities to increase the inclusion of young people in higher education.

The State Government Policy Context
In line with the National policy framework, the Queensland government provides support services which target young people aged between 12 and 25 years. In particular, the services most likely to achieve increased social inclusion are those that aim to support young people experiencing limited opportunities for participation in the social, cultural, or economic life of the community, including disadvantaged or ‘at risk’ young people. This includes young people at risk of homelessness, early school leaving or negative stereotyping.
Disaster Resilience and Recovery
This section focuses on Policies, Programs and Action Plans which reflect National and State government directions in relation to social inclusion and disaster resilience and recovery.

International Policy Frameworks

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is a ten year plan to make the world safer from natural disasters. The disaster risk management (DRM) was endorsed as a development priority through the HFA in 2005. The HFA focuses on building international resilience to natural disasters. 168 governments and international organisations are involved in this compact, including the UN and the World Bank. The HFA objectives include:

- integrating DRM in development policies, strategies and planning;
- to strengthen institutions responsible for DRM at all levels, and;
- to build a culture of disaster resilience in response and recovery operations (Cited, http://web.worldbank.org/)

The National Government Policy Context

Council of Australian Governments (COAG)
In December 2009, COAG adopted a ‘whole-of-nation resilience based approach’ to disaster management. This recognised that ‘disaster resilience will be strengthened where communities have continued access to essential services provided by critical infrastructure organisations’. The resulting launch of the Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy named three objectives with the third being ‘to raise awareness of the need for an organisational resilience approach and to promote thinking on concepts underpinning organisation resilience in the critical infrastructure community’. COAG adopted the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience on 13 February 2011 (http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/CouncilofAustralianGovernmentsMeeting_CouncilofAustralianGovernmentsMeeting).

A new focus on regional areas has gained prominence under the Gillard Government. The series of national disasters which occurred in late 2010 and early 2011 have influenced policy and funding directions in ways which are relevant to this Region. The National Urban Policy, being administered by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC), includes three Initiatives of particular relevance:

- Increase resilience to climate change, emergency events and natural hazards;
- Protect and sustain our natural and built environments;
- Support community wellbeing.

The State Government Policy Context

Disaster Management Strategic Policy Framework (DMSPF)
The DMSPF was produced in 2005 and recognises that a disaster resilient community is one that works collectively to understand and manage the disaster risks that confront it. The Framework:

- articulates the policy, principles and objectives for disaster management for the State in line with the guiding principles and objectives of the Disaster Management Act 2003, and;
- supports the development and introduction of climate change adaptation and sustainability initiatives.
The DMSPF guides the development and implementation of disaster management policy and programs at State and local government level to achieve the State government’s priorities, in particular the promotion of safer, and more secure and resilient communities. Additionally, the DMSPF is a tool for the effective integration of disaster management planning and programming across agencies and sectors. It also provides a strategic benchmark against which reporting and evaluation of outcomes can be undertaken (Cited, http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au/Disaster%20Resources/Documents/Disaster_Management_Strategic_Policy_Framework.pdf).
Early Years and Family
This section focuses on Policies, Programs and Action Plans which reflect National and State government directions in relation to social inclusion and early years and family.

International Policy Frameworks

UNICEF’s Convention on The Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN for implementation in September 1990. The Convention incorporates the whole spectrum of human rights - civil, political, economic, social and cultural - and sets out the specific ways these rights should be ensured. The Convention recognises that the degree to which children can exercise these rights independently is influenced by their evolving maturity. It also emphasises the rights and responsibilities of parents, where applicable, as well as some responsibilities of government.

Some of the core principles relevant to social inclusion for children and families in the Convention are:

- the right to survival and development;
- respect for the best interests of the child as a primary consideration;
- the right of all children to express their views freely on all matters affecting them;
- the right of all children to enjoy all the rights of the Convention without discrimination of any kind;
- the right to receive education, which will promote culture and enable the development of the child’s abilities, individual judgement, a sense of moral and social responsibility - in becoming a useful member of society;
- the right to play and recreation, with an educational intent;
- In order for some outcomes to be achieved, special care and protection may need to be provided not only to the child but to the family.

In addition to these Principles, the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines) contains guidelines on Family; Education; Community; Social policy; and Socialization processes. A number of these contain clauses of specific relevance to the social inclusion of children and families. These clauses include:

Socialisation processes, which outlines the need for emphasis on preventive policies that ensure the successful socialization and integration of children and young persons, particularly through the family, community, peers, schools, vocational training and employment, and through voluntary organizations. Children and young persons should be accepted as partners in socialisation and integration processes.

Family, which includes the roles and responsibilities of society and governments in prioritising the needs and well-being of the family and of all its members; preserving the integrity of the family, including the extended family; assisting family in providing care and protection and in ensuring the physical and mental well-being of children; bringing up children in stable and settled family environments, particularly in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children of migrant and refugee families in maintaining traditional rearing of children; programs developed to provide families with the opportunity to learn about parental roles and obligations in child development, and; measures to promote family cohesion and harmony and discourage the separation of children from their parents (unless circumstances affecting the welfare and future of the child require such action).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world. Australia ratified the Convention in December 1990, and the Australian Human Rights Commission has the role of monitoring Australia’s compliance.
The National Government Policy Context

The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children was first endorsed by COAG on 30 April 2009. Through this framework, COAG, in partnership with the community sector, developed and continue to implement a national framework for protecting Australia’s children. The National Framework outlines a meaningful, long term national approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Australian children and aims to deliver a substantial and sustained reduction in levels of child abuse and neglect.

The Framework’s priorities include enhancing the evidence base, filling research gaps, and developing national standards for out-of-home care. Other priorities are identified where it is agreed that immediate action is necessary, including, for example, sexual abuse, the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people leaving care and improved support for grandparents, kinship and foster carers.

The framework aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Children live in safe and supportive families and communities
- Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and early intervention
- Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed
- Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are supported and safe in their families and communities
- Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support.


The State Government Policy Context

Queensland government agencies with primary carriage of services around early childhood and families are the Commission for Children and Young People and the Child Guardian, and the Department of Communities, including the Office of Child Safety Services and the Department of Education and Training.

The Queensland Government is working with all Australian Governments to deliver national reforms and joint initiatives, including the introduction of the National Quality Framework (NQF), aimed at providing all children with the best start for life and learning.

The NQF introduces a new integrated national approach to the regulation and quality assessment processes for long day care, family day care, outside school hour’s care and kindergarten services.

The Early Phase of Learning Action Plan was published in September 2007 and describes the principles, practice and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children’s learning from birth to five years of age, including their transition into school (http://deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/families/).
**Toward Q2: Tomorrow’s QLD (Q2)** promotes a partnership approach and provides the organising framework for the State government and related programs. As a part of Q2, the State government has committed to:

- all children having access to quality early childhood education
- halving the proportion of Queensland children living in households without a working parent
- increasing by fifty percent the proportion of Queenslanders involved in their communities as volunteers ([www.towardsq2.qld.gov.au](http://www.towardsq2.qld.gov.au)).
References

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http://www.ds-int.org/media/un_crpd


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www.fahcsia.gov.au

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www.seniors.gov.au

National Disability Strategy

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Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020
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http://rdamoretonbay.org.au/

The National Partnership on Youth attainment and transitions

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www.ayac.org.au

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