

Stronger
Places

Stronger
People

Community-led systems change to disrupt disadvantage

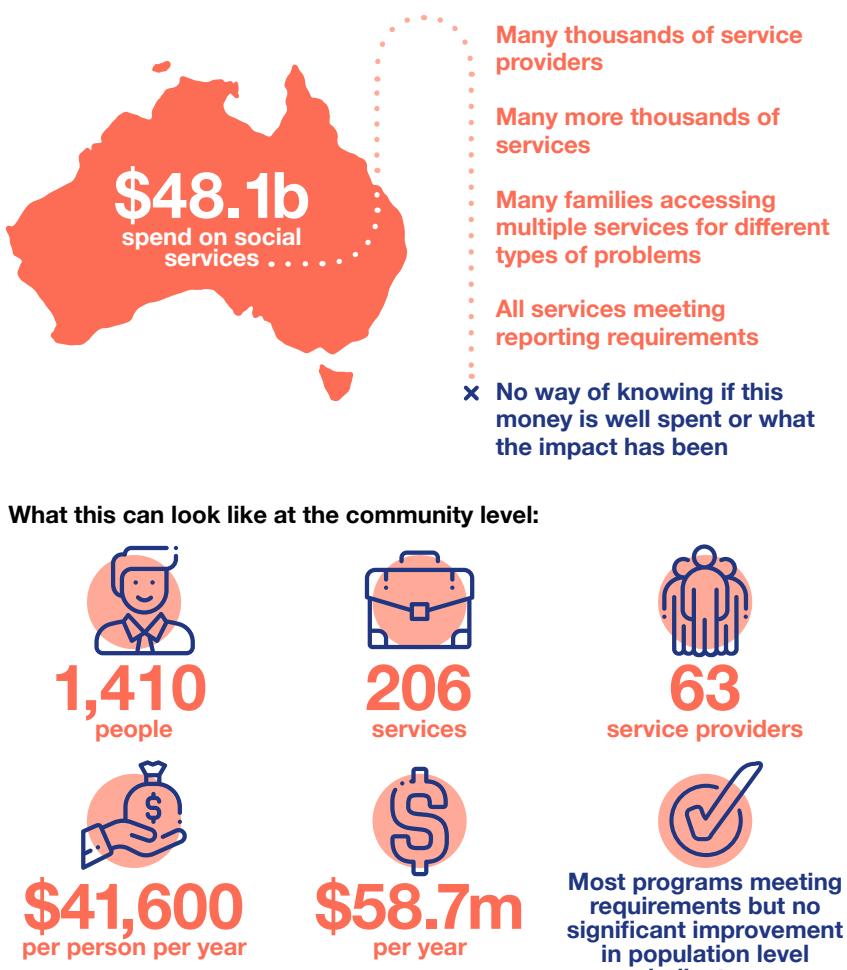
For generations our social services system has been falling short

For generations, governments have designed social policies and invested in programs to try and lift individuals and cohorts of people toward self-sufficiency, good health, safety and wellbeing.

In fact, \$48.1 billion dollars is spent each year¹ on traditional responses which are often:

- single issue responses
- approached from the top down
- delivered in a power dynamic which is disenfranchising for the community it's trying to help
- fragmented programmatic responses which aren't sustainable
- unilateral government interventions
- delivered with a limited appetite for risk which stifles opportunities to create real change
- evaluated with a focus on outputs or service user outcomes rather than overall community change and impact.

The evidence is clear that for communities experiencing entrenched disadvantage, current policy settings and program interventions are not enabling the progress governments and communities seek to achieve.



In layman's terms, the current system as it is isn't working and we need a new approach.

Most experts agree that no single policy, government department, organisation or program can solve the complex and interconnected problems facing most people living in communities where poverty and disadvantage is concentrated.

They argue that solutions that offer most promise will be achieved through an integrated policy and investment approach,

executed through locally-tailored, evidence-driven solutions to local problems in partnership with local people.

In other words, a better way is when the current systems work together and speak to each other with the common goal of helping to support communities experiencing disadvantage to lead the charge in making change themselves.

1. AAIHW Welfare expenditure snapshot, 11 September 2019 <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/welfare-expenditure>
Welfare services encompass services and programs to support and assist people and the community. Examples are family support services, youth programs, childcare services, services for older people, and services for people with disability. Note this figure excludes welfare payments.

Introducing the **Stronger Places Stronger People** initiative

This is why the Australian Government is investing \$35m over 5 years in the **Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative**. The initiative has been created to explore, develop, implement and measure a new method in helping address the root causes of disadvantage in Australian communities.

The method being used has been implemented and researched both in Australia and overseas with very positive results and is called collective impact.

Essentially, collective impact is a community-led approach to addressing complex social challenges like intergenerational disadvantage. The goal of implementing the methodology is to achieve large-scale change, informed by broad and inclusive community and stakeholder engagement. It provides resources to address poverty and disadvantage in ways which are unique to each community and led by each community.

Due to its success, the Australian government is partnering with communities experiencing disadvantage and their state/territory governments to create better long-term, long-lasting outcomes for these communities

So, what is collective impact exactly?

Collective impact is a method of addressing complex social challenges like intergenerational disadvantage. It brings together an ecosystem of organisations, stakeholders and government agencies operating in a community to help empower that community to solve the issues it's facing, **acknowledging communities are the experts in their own lives – it puts them at the centre of solving the issues facing them daily.**

Collective impact recognises that communities - their people and their leaders - can solve issues they face. It provides a framework of key conditions and support structures - including data and evidence - to help them to identify problems and come up with their own solutions. Implementation is community-led in partnership with government, business, philanthropy, NGOs and academia.

Too many organizations are working in isolation from one another.

Collective impact brings people together, in a structured way, to achieve social change.²



It starts with a common agenda

That means coming together to collectively define the problem and create a shared vision to solve it.



It establishes shared measurements

That means agreeing to track progress in the same way, which allows for continuous improvement.



It fosters mutually reinforcing activities

That means coordinating collective efforts to maximize the end result.



It encourages continuous communication

That means building trust and relationships among all participants.



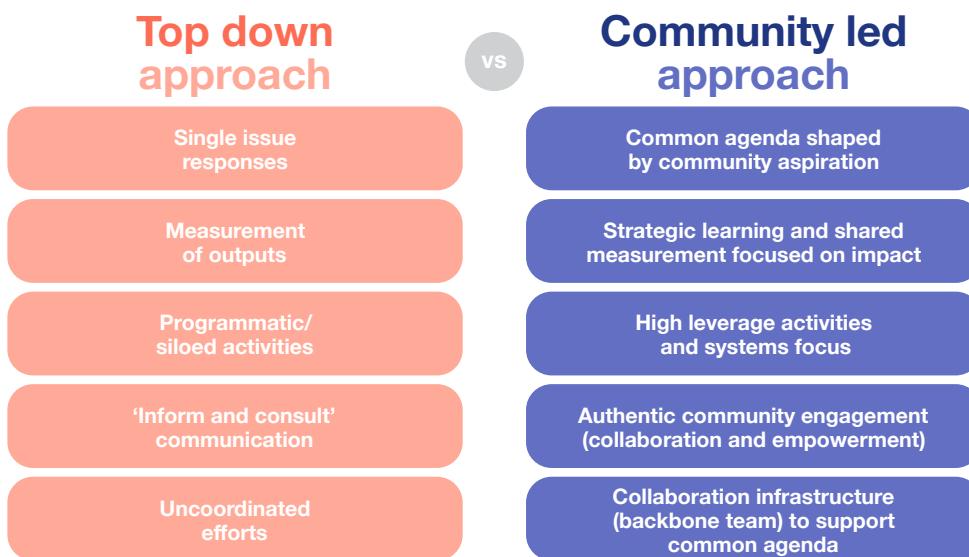
And it has a strong backbone

That means having a team dedicated to orchestrating the work of the group.

Where did it start?

The term ‘collective impact’ was first coined in 2011 by John Kania and Mark Kramer of FSG Consulting. They identified the key ingredients (also known as conditions) of successful community efforts to shift government and institutional welfare solutions “from fragmented action and results” (which is what Australia’s current social services system is akin to now) to “**collective action and deep and durable impact.**”³

This ‘interconnected ecosystem’ of supports and conditions provides communities with the tools to disrupt the root causes of complex intergenerational disadvantage, with the community at the centre.



Collective Impact in action

Medicine Hat, Canada

In 2015, the leaders of Medicine Hat, a small city of 60,000 on the Canadian prairies, declared that they had eliminated chronic homelessness. While admitting their limited influence on many of the drivers that create homelessness –such as poor jobs, mental health, family breakdown, or high-priced housing – they had developed a system that can place someone in an affordable house, with an array of support services, within 10 days of being on the street.

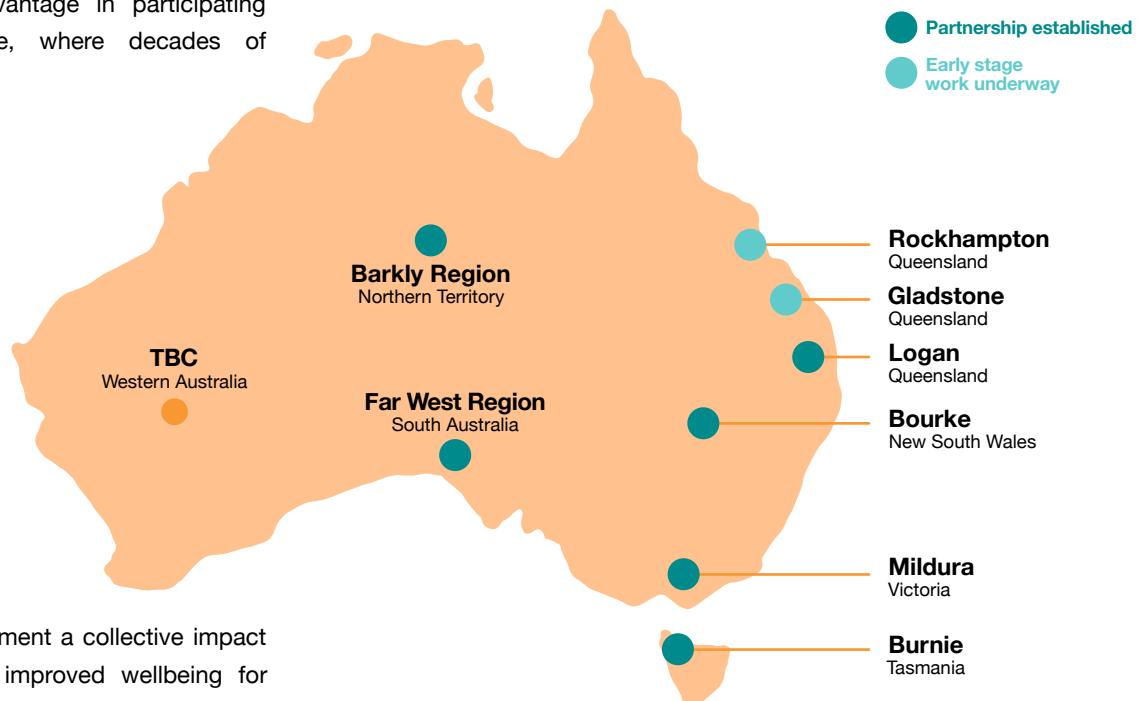
Emboldened by this success, Medicine Hat is now turning its attention to eliminating food insecurity and poverty. The citizens of this prairie city are not alone in their efforts to “move the needle” on complex issues. Across Canada there are hundreds of community wide initiatives to end homelessness, reduce poverty, improve early childhood development outcomes, increase high school graduation rates, and strengthen community safety. There are thousands more across the world.⁴

Stronger Places Stronger People initiative

The Australian Government's response to disrupting disadvantage by demonstrating the collective impact method

Stronger Places, Stronger People is partnering with 10 communities to demonstrate that place-based collective impact practice can create better outcomes for children and their families and can disrupt disadvantage in participating communities over time, where decades of interventions have failed.

These communities include;
Logan, Gladstone and Rockhampton in Queensland, Bourke in NSW, Far West Region in South Australia, the Barkly Region in the Northern Territory, Burnie in Tasmania and Mildura in Victoria.



The objective is to implement a collective impact approach, demonstrate improved wellbeing for communities across a myriad of issues that are associated with disadvantage and measure the impact achieved.

It is expected, that over the next four years of implementation, **Stronger Places, Stronger People will unlock a systems reform** and offer Australia a new way to disrupt disadvantage so that we can achieve real and lasting results for communities experiencing intergenerational issues of homelessness, high levels of incarceration, poverty, domestic abuse, health issues and short life spans.

The long-term goal of **Stronger Places, Stronger People** is to model a new way of addressing disadvantage in Australia. Where shifting the system to back in community-led agendas for change creates better long-term, long-lasting outcomes for these communities.

How is **Stronger Places** **Stronger People** approaching implementation?

- 1** A long-term, whole-of-community approach at the local level.
- 2** Anchored to a life-course, ‘cradle to career’ framework, informed by values, evidence and local data.
- 3** Delivered through high-leverage social change strategies defined in the community’s strategy and plan of action.
- 4** Authorised through governments and other funders devolving planning and decision-making to the local level.
- 5** Enabled by local strategic coordination through a local Backbone team to design a community’s strategy and plan of action, facilitate transparent and collaborative local implementation, and lead local understanding, measurement, evaluation, and learning activities.
- 6** Powered by cultural and other local leaders, families, service providers, philanthropists, and government officials sharing accountability for planning, decision-making, and results.
- 7** Measured through annual analysis of progress to determine if the collaboration model improves lives and opportunities and delivers better returns on investment.
- 8** Scaled through evidence of what works and sustained through strong, supportive peer networks between **Stronger Places**, **Stronger People** communities.

Case Studies

The Logan Together project

Logan

Kids who are doing well by age 8 have the best chance to be healthy, happy and resilient adults. The years 0-3 are particularly critical. Right now, about 70% of Logan kids are thriving across all aspects of wellbeing – But Logan wants that number to be higher. Logan want to help 5,000 more kids thrive by 2025 – and partners in the Logan Together movement are making sure that happens.

In 2015 between 500 and 600 Logan women accessed little or no care during pregnancy and many did not seek care after giving birth. Lack of care during pregnancy is associated with poorer health outcomes at birth and beyond for both mother and child.

Lack of transport, poverty, drug and alcohol and mental health issues contributed, as did a lack of trust in institutions for a significant number of new mums.

The Logan Together collective impact initiative worked with Logan women to build trust, help design new Community

Maternal and Child Health Hubs and encourage at risk women to receive continuous care throughout their pregnancy.

By the end of June 2018, 169 women had accessed the Hubs and received continuous care throughout their pregnancies and this is expected to increase to 1,000 new mums in 2020.

If Logan Together's work helps just one child avoid being on welfare for a lifetime, the savings equate to \$4 million. This is money which can be put into supporting other community-led initiatives to disrupt disadvantage.

*"Tapping into this diverse community and what's needed to make it thrive requires a genuine collaboration between community, industry and government. If we all have the same goal in mind – a bright future for our children – there's nothing holding us back."*⁵

That's collective impact in action.



The Maranguka initiative

Bourke

When the local community in Bourke in far north New South Wales set up its Maranguka initiative to provide better outcomes and opportunities for its young people, it harnessed a collective impact approach.

Community members voiced their concerns over the level of youth offending and the number of Aboriginal children and young people in incarceration. The Maranguka Initiative — the first major justice reinvestment project in Australia — is designed to create better coordinated support to vulnerable families and children in Bourke (located in North West New South Wales). It involves establishing community-led, multi-disciplinary teams working in partnership with relevant stakeholders and government agencies.⁶

Over six years of implementing solutions through a collective impact approach, the community has seen a steady decline in domestic and family violence, in offending by young people and in both the incarceration and re-offending by adults.

KPMG's conservative estimate of savings generated in Bourke thanks to the initiative is \$3.1 million per year.

If Maranguka's work continues to assist just one young person from Bourke to live their life with family and out of jail, this would save an estimated \$14 million over the life span of that young person.

Bourke is now one of eight communities partnering with **Stronger Places, Stronger People**.

Through applying the collective impact framework over the next 3 years, the following elements will be strengthened and developed in Bourke:

- Whole-of-community and whole-of-government **common agenda** to reduce youth crime and increase community safety
- Shared measures for change based on real-time data
- A common approach, based on best evidence, for creating change in the shared measures and developing the will and capability within the system to implement these responses
- A backbone organisation to perform the necessary functions of facilitating the collaboration, continuously communicating and tracking change in the shared measures.
- A clear financial picture of the cost of implementation and the costs saved through effective implementation.

In one sense collective impact is not new. As Alistair Ferguson, Founder and Executive Director of Maranguka, and a member of the National Leadership Group, has said: *“The concept of Maranguka is 65,000 years old and it still holds the same meaning today within a contemporary context. This is a genuine partnership with everyone and we value them in the process.”*



Working together the National Leadership Group

Stronger Places, Stronger People is designed using collective impact methodology and relies on multiple stakeholders coming together to work for change. The National Leadership Group supporting the **Stronger Places, Stronger People** initiative exists to champion the initiative by generating national support, new networks and investment, reform funding and institutional arrangements, and advocate for resolution of systemic barriers.

The group consists of various community and business leaders, academics and philanthropists, all who are passionate about improving the lives of our most disadvantaged Australians.

Our members are dedicated to bringing all of their collective knowledge, expertise, influence, power, connections and resources to the table, in order to guide, advise, shape and champion the **Stronger Places, Stronger People** initiative to drive better outcomes for Australians experiencing entrenched disadvantage.

While we know there will never be a single answer to solving the complex problems of extreme disadvantage, the National Leadership Group and all the various stakeholders involved, are confident that **Stronger Places, Stronger People** can unlock a better system for vulnerable Australians and use the current money spent on social services each year in more effective ways.



Who is calling for this?



Australia Together pre-Budget submission 2020

Expand and strengthen the role of existing place-based initiatives so that communities doing it toughest are enabled to become more prosperous and resilient.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eccbe4ec6fa01358cfceb8b/t/5f444aa70b5bcb3ba9c36b4a/1598311084362/2020824+-+Budget+Submission+Final.pdf> P7-8



Motion to Australian Local Government Association General Assembly 2020

Councils call on the Australian Government to investigate opportunities for place-based social investment and service integration reforms that reflect the collective impact model, in an effort to tackle complex social issues in Australia.



Jesuit Social Services submission to the 2019/20 Victorian State Budget

That the Victorian Government would work toward implementing whole-of-government place-based approaches to addressing entrenched disadvantage across multiple domains, with a lens of ecological and environmental justice, targeting the three per cent most disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria.



TasCOSS 2019/20 Budget Priorities Statement

Long term change will be achieved when we build on the leadership capabilities within our communities.

Community members, including those who are unemployed and experience disadvantage, need to be at the centre of decision-making.

<https://tascoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/TasCOSS-Budget-Priorities-Submission-2019-2020-FINAL.pdf>



PC report on Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory

Despite significant investment, governments are making short term funding decisions in relative isolation without a good understanding of the needs and priorities of communities, and existing services funded by other government agencies.

The system of children and family services is highly fragmented. There are overlaps, duplication and gaps in expenditure effort between and within governments. Services are poorly targeted and don't always account for cultural strengths or the needs of children and families.

<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/nt-children/report>



Thrive by Five

We believe every child can, and should, thrive by the age of five. At Minderoo Foundation we believe communities have the answers to local problems and that empowered communities can make decisions and direct resources to the solutions that best address their needs. We believe that taking a human development-centred approach that prioritises children and the early years of life is the most effective way to improve outcomes for children for generations to come.

<https://www.minderoo.org/thrive-by-five/#overview>



PC Commission report into Human Services 2017

Governments fund family and community services to improve the wellbeing of people at risk of hardship or harm. These services are not delivering the best possible outcomes for the people who use them, their families, or for governments that fund them.

<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/human-services/reforms/report> P21



NT Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT 2017

The Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments commit to a 'place-based' approach for the implementation of the relevant recommendations of this report in partnership with local communities.

<https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-01/rcnt-royal-commission-nt-findings-and-recommendations.pdf> P28



Empowered Communities Design Report 2015

There needs to be a fundamental shift away from the traditional social policy framework in which Indigenous affairs has been conducted, to a comprehensive Indigenous Empowerment agenda.

<https://empoweredcommunities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/EC-Report.pdf> P11



Dusseldorf Forum - Place based resilience: Community driven response and recovery in a time of covid-19 2020

To unleash the potential of place-based approaches, the systems that govern regional development and social change need to transform. in an effort to tackle complex social issues in Australia.

<https://www.dusseldorf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Place-based-resilience-report-2020.pdf> P11-12



Centre for Community Child Health Policy Brief 2011

A place-based approach addresses the broader problems that impact upon families at the community level as well as the barriers to families accessing services (e.g. fragmented service systems, lack of outreach capacity).

https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main_Content/ccch/Policy_Brief_23_-_place-based_approaches_final_web2.pdf P2-3



Centre for Public Impact – A Manifesto for Better Government 2020

Our models of government are broken and in urgent need of reform. They are based on a flawed “industrial” mindset that seeks to manage and control. As such, they don’t recognise the true nature of the challenges we face, fail to tap our collective human potential to address those challenges and offer static solutions to dynamic problems.

<https://medium.com/centre-for-public-impact/a-manifesto-for-better-government-8121132f45ef>



NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into crystal methamphetamine and other amphetamine-type stimulants 2020

That the NSW Government support local, community-driven collective impact initiatives, including justice reinvestment initiatives, that aim to respond to the local drivers of drug use, and actively support the further expansion of such programs, in consultation with local communities.

<https://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/assets/dpc-nsw-gov-au/publications/The-Drug-ice-1546/02-Report-Volume-1a.pdf> Recomendations 4 & 20



Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System – interim report 2019

Fixing the architecture of the mental health system will also be a central concern. The legislative and human rights framework, roles and accountabilities between various governments and organisations that operate in the system, and the way services are funded, commissioned and delivered will continue to form part of the Commission’s deliberations. In particular, the Commission will consider how these foundations can be leveraged to establish a redesigned system to deliver what people with lived experience value and seek.

<https://rcvms.vic.gov.au/royal-commission-makes-first-recommendations-change> P585



Collaboration for Impact - Lessons from the Field, Butcher and Gilchrist D, ANU Press 2020

Place-based approaches—often associated with the collective impact framework—present a unique response to problems rather than a one-size-fits-all response and are grounded in the lived experiences of the individuals and communities the collaboration seeks to serve.

<https://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n7244/html/cover.xhtml?referer=&page=0#P219>



QCOSS – Place-based approaches

QCOSS has a focus on place-based work because globally, place-based approaches are being recognised as critical to responding effectively to certain community challenges and building strong, cohesive communities. There is significant evidence and a multitude of impressive stories demonstrating real change that supports this.

<https://www.qcoss.org.au/our-work/place-based-approaches/>



VCOSS – Communities Taking Power 2018

Communities have great power to drive the solutions that will give everyone the chance to connect, fulfil their potential, and share the benefits of social and economic growth. Place-based approaches can be the key to unlocking it.

https://vcoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Communities_Taking_Power_FINAL_WebUpload.pdf P5



ChangeFest 2018 statement

ChangeFest participants call on political leaders, community organisations, philanthropists, businesses, and others to make a long-term, transparent investment in Australia by empowering communities to provide a better future for their children.

<https://changefest.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Final-ChangeFest-Policy-Statement-presented-CF-22-Nov.pdf> P4-5



Submission on Closing the Gap on Indigenous Justice 2020

The 2020 Closing the Gap statement again illuminated that we need to work differently if we want different results. Investing in the agency and ownership of communities to thrive means investing in new ways of working.