

**Melbourne Community Foundation
Annual General Meeting
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Introduction

Thank you very much for the invitation to address this evening's Annual General Meeting. It really is a pleasure to be here.

While we are a relatively young organisation, the McCaughey Centre (launched in June 2007) has a strong commitment to working collaboratively with like-minded organisations (and indeed non like-minded organisations when we can manage to change their minds!) on social justice issues.

While what we offer is a research lens on issues of critical social importance, we love to see ideas and evidence put into practice. This to us is the great value of the partnership we have with the Melbourne Community Foundation. In this collaboration, we see the trend data, the knowledge of policy environments and innovative thinking around practical responses to disadvantage come together to make change happen.

These three things – data, policy and practice – provide the frame for my talk here this evening.

My primary goal is to provide you with an oversight of the research recently undertaken by the McCaughey Centre for the Melbourne Community Foundation.

This research was commissioned to provide input into the 2009 update of the 2006 MCF publication *Macro Melbourne Initiative: Developing Strategic Responses to Disadvantage in Melbourne Today and Towards 2030*.

It was a review and a refresh of that original, ground-breaking report, with the goal of providing guidance to the strategic direction of the Melbourne Community Foundation, including ideas on a new set of investment priorities to guide the philanthropic and corporate sector in addressing disadvantage.

While I understand there will be an official launch of the report , and the companion booklet which outlines potential projects for philanthropic/ corporate support, in the next few weeks, we do have some advance copies available for you tonight. And, importantly, I would like to acknowledge the work of Belinda Robson and John Wiseman who are the authors of the report.

The new report is intended to assist the Foundation update the 2006 *Macro Melbourne* document by addressing three key questions.

- What are the most significant emerging trends and challenges effecting disadvantage and inequality in Melbourne in 2009?
- What are the main directions in Commonwealth and State government policy designed to reduce disadvantage and inequality?
- What are the highest priority areas for philanthropic action and investment to help meet these challenges?

This evening it is my plan to step you through these three questions. I will present what we see as some of the main issues emerging from the data – the headliners - and draw out implications are for philanthropic and corporate support, as well as some links to the McCaughey Centre’s work.

The issues

The 2009 *MacroMelbourne* report argues that there are seven significant trends and challenges effecting disadvantage and inequality in metropolitan Melbourne. These seven trends are:

- i) Rapid population growth, particularly in outer urban areas.
- ii) The employment and economic impact of the global financial crisis.

- iii) Rapid increases in the number of people with multiple and complex needs.
- iv) Ongoing challenges facing migrant, refugee and Indigenous communities.
- v) Lack of access to affordable housing.
- vi) Lack of access to affordable transport and communications.
- vii) The health and wellbeing impacts of climate change - particularly on vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

While all of these are critical, I am going to do is draw your attention to a few of them that we see as particularly significant trends or issues for Melbourne at this point in time. Issues that have emerged or become compounded since the release of the first *MacroMelbourne* in 2006. And indeed, which have become the focus of new priorities as identified by MCF.

- I am going to talk firstly, about the growth of the outer urban areas and what this means for policy and practice. This will include discussion of issues related to housing, transport and communication in these areas.
- Secondly, I am going to focus on a couple of population group issues. By that I mean, issues facing specific groups in the community that have become particularly acute in the last couple of years. In particular, challenges related to
 - Firstly, living with a disability and
 - Secondly, living with the structural disadvantages that come with belonging to a particular ethnic group, including the impact of racism.
- Third, we will look at the issue of climate change, one that was certainly around in 2006, but which I am sure we would all agree now has a new and much more prominent position in both the public and political imagination.

1. Rapid population growth, particularly in outer urban areas.

First, let us turn to the issue of rapid population growth, particularly in outer urban areas.

Data

Since 2006 Melbourne's population has continued to grow rapidly and is on target to reach 5 million by 2030. This will see approximately 1.8 million additional people living in metropolitan Melbourne and 477,000 in regional Victoria (Victorian Government, 2008).

Melbourne's population growth is not uniform. While the central city of Melbourne also grew rapidly most of the fastest growing municipalities between 2001 and 2006, were located on the urban fringe. These included Melton (8.9% growth) – the highest in Melbourne- Wyndham (5.9%), Cardinia (4.5%) and Casey (4.1%).

Despite the high service needs of such communities, the National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) – a peak organisation representing local government areas on the urban fringe- has noted low levels of provision in community support, health and education as measured by the number of jobs in these sectors. They estimate residents face a 25% disadvantage in terms of these communities' access to the services they need.

In short, this is where we see most population growth, without a parallel growth in social and economic infrastructure. This, not surprisingly, has implications for so aspects of people lives – particularly those who are disadvantaged.

Response

The rapidly emerging challenges facing new growth areas combined with the acute lack of existing social and physical infrastructure make this a particularly urgent focus for innovation and intervention.

Philanthropically funded initiatives will be particularly important in identifying and responding to emerging needs and challenges in new urban growth areas – and in encouraging appropriate long term investment by government and non government agencies.

Useful initiatives could include funding for:

- Projects designed to improve public transport access.

- Community information centres and meeting places for new growth area communities.
- Development of youth services and facilities.
- Development of innovative community safety and crime prevention initiatives.
- Programs designed to re-engage disadvantaged students in education and learning.

I would briefly like to note here that McCaughey has completed or is currently conducting research in Hume, Whittlesea, Casey and Cardinia (among others), in addition to work completed last year for the Growth Areas Authority on *Creating Liveable Communities* – primarily the development of a framework and checklist for liveability in these new communities.

2. Population Groups

The second issue I wanted to talk to was in relation to population groups.

And, there are two particular population group issues that I would like to draw your attention to this evening.

The first of these is the rapid increases in the number of people with disabilities, in particular those with multiple and complex needs, and the second is the way in which we in Melbourne respond to our ever-growing cultural diversity.

Data

Measured in a range of ways, what we are seeing in Melbourne is a rapid increases in the number of people with multiple and complex needs. This is evidenced by, for example:

- The fact that the proportion of Melbourne's population aged over 75 will continue to increase leading to increasing pressures on agencies to met the multiple and diverse health and service needs of older people. Indeed, the Council on the Aging (COTA) has reported an increase in calls to its information line from 17,000 in 2005/06 to 23,000 in 2006/07 (COTA 2008).

- The number of people in Victoria with a severe or profound disability is also projected to continue to grow rapidly from 335,300 in 2006 to 362,800 in 2010 (AIHW 2007). In June 2008, there were 1358 Victorians with a disability waiting for supported accommodation and 1282 waiting for in-home support (Carers Victoria 2008).
- The number of people with unmet mental health issues is also increasing rapidly with the Department of Human Services (DHS) recently estimating that the numbers of people with a diagnosed mental illness will increase by at least 100,000 in the decade between 2009 to 2019 (DHS 2009). DHS has also noted that, in any 12-month period, approximately 44 per cent of people with severe mental illness are not serviced by either the public or the private system

In this context it is important to recognize that specialist services for the aged, people with a disability, and the mentally ill are operating at full capacity and that complex client needs are increasing.

The community as a whole is affected by the growing demands related to people with complex needs, and carers in particular face the risk of long-term economic, social and health problems as a result of their caring responsibilities. It has been noted in recent research that two to four times the numbers of female carers report their health as being fair or poor compared to women of the same age who do not have a primary caring role (NATSEM 2008).

Response

The global financial crisis is likely to directly increase pressure on disadvantaged families and communities; increase demands on services - and may also reduce funds available to non government community service agencies.

It is also likely to put further strain on services already struggling to maintain required levels of service provision. Services such as housing, financial counselling, emergency relief and psychological support are likely to be more in demand, whilst

employment services will be required to assist the newly unemployed to find jobs whilst also maintaining a focus on the long-term unemployed.

Philanthropic and corporate funding can play an important role in assisting in building the capacity of the community services sector to meet the needs of both new and existing clients. The challenge is to identify better ways to address immediate hardship while not leaving behind the long-term clients.

Useful philanthropic initiatives could include funding for:

- New models for strengthening the capacity of agencies to support families with multiple challenges and needs
- Innovative support programs to meet the needs of carers, particularly carers from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Training opportunities, mentoring and employment exchange programs for community sector staff which can strengthen skills in working with individuals and families with complex needs.
- Investment in new information and communications technologies to improve capacity of community service agencies.

Ongoing challenges facing migrant, refugee and Indigenous communities.

The second population group issue that I wanted to refer to briefly was the ongoing challenges facing migrant, refugee and Indigenous communities.

- Cultural diversity is increasing in Melbourne, with a 10.5% increase in the percentage of people speaking a language other than English at home between 2001 and 2006 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship [DIAC] 2008).
- It is well known (although it never fails to shock) that on nearly every indicator of inequality, Indigenous people are the most disadvantaged population group in Melbourne (Allen Consulting Group 2008). Health, Education, Housing - The need to close this gap must remain one of the key government and service provider challenges.

Useful philanthropic initiatives could include funding for:

- Projects designed to improve employment, education, health, housing and community service outcomes for recently arrived migrants and refugees.
- Projects designed to improve employment, education, health, housing and community service outcomes for Indigenous communities.

On this issue, I did particularly want to draw to your attention the fact that McCaughey has a range of projects on the impact of race-based discrimination on health and wellbeing. Indeed tomorrow the Attorney General will be launching our latest report: *Building on our strengths: a framework for reducing discrimination and supporting diversity*. It is based on an international examination of evidence on interventions in the area of racism prevention and is intended to support practice and policy development in the area. So keep an eye out for that.

3. The health and wellbeing impacts of climate change - particularly on vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

Finally, I would like to turn to the third issue on my list, the issue of climate change.

Data

Alarming evidence continues to mount about the rate at which our climate is changing and the implications this has for the ecological and social systems we depend on. The 2009 Copenhagen International Scientific Congress on Climate Change noted that:

Climate change is having, and will have, strongly differential effects on people within and between countries and regions, on this generation and future generations, and on human societies and the natural world.

People without the financial resources to adapt to a changing climate will suffer greater effects. Many people living on low incomes will struggle to make the capital investment required to reduce their risk. Some population groups such as isolated older people and people with chronic illness will be more affected by health effects of climate change.

These effects will be felt in relation to food and water supplies, energy consumption, housing and transport.

Without taking too much more of your time, I would just like to note that climate change is one of our research priorities – particularly in relation to its impact on health and wellbeing. We have worked closely with Advocacy by a range of organisations including the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, VCOSS, DPCD and DHS to bring together compelling evidence of the likely impact of climate change on the health and wellbeing of particular population groups.

But there is much more that needs to be done.

Response

The Macro Melbourne update notes that useful philanthropic initiatives could include funding for:

- Improved understanding of the impacts of climate change on the health and wellbeing of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.
- Climate literacy and community engagement projects which enable informed community debate about the liveability implications of climate change and the transition to an equitable low income society.
- Subsidising and supporting affordable retrofitting programs for low income households, including solar panels, water tanks, upgrades of heating and cooling systems and insulation projects.
- Exploring new urban growth area strategies for transitioning to an equitable low carbon future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is one final point to make. And that relates to underlying principles shaping both the prioritisation of projects and the design of projects.

Feedback from a range of government and non government policy makers and service providers also strongly emphasized the importance of prioritising projects which combine:

- i) the encouragement of innovative, collaborative approaches, and
- ii) clear strategies for sharing learning and maximizing the likelihood of successful policy and practice innovations being scaled up and generalized – leading to broader, long term reductions in disadvantage and inequality in metropolitan Melbourne.

It's a terrific agenda that you have ahead of you. Indeed that we have ahead of us. I look forward to continuing to work with you on it.

Thank you.