

Shaping the Future: the role of Social Services in Australia's future

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Shaping our future together

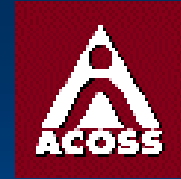


The community sector

237,000 people employed in community service organisations

The ABS has estimated that as at the end of June 2000 there were 9,287 employing businesses and organisations involved in the provision of community services.

The 9,287 businesses and organisations comprised 5,938 'not for profit' organisations, 2,800 'for profit' organisations, and 548 government organisations.



Service workforce indicators

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Paid staff (full time equivalent)	12,135	29
Voluntary Board/ Management	6,198	15
Voluntary service Delivery	10,943	26
Other voluntary	13,047	30
<u>Total</u>	<u>42,323</u>	<u>100</u>

... but service provision is not all we do

The community sector is more than a provider of services. It also

- Promotes heightened sense of community and social responsibility which goes beyond the provision of services
- Works with and on behalf of disadvantaged groups as a voice for those most marginalised
- Shapes public/community priorities with government, highlighting areas of need and providing on-the-ground experience of policy **in action**



Our communities in transition

- Second and third generation unemployment emerged in late 1980s
- Changing nature of families
- Structurally ageing population
- Intergenerational equity
- Housing and homelessness
- Locational disadvantage
- Indigenous poverty and disadvantage

Australians living on the edge

- 2 million Australians live in poverty *including:*
 - 1 million in 'working poor' households
 - 3.6 million households on less than \$400/week
 - 860,000 children in jobless families
 - increasing inequality

Australians living on the edge

Poverty has complex causes and effects:

- Early disadvantage has lifelong impacts
- Increasing multiple and complex need
- Issues of self esteem, skills, belonging, and lack of access to basic physical and social infrastructure all create complex barriers to participation

Barriers to quality services

Stresses on services

Expanding needs/limited resources

Case management demands/limited options
for referral

Rising capital/service infrastructure cost

Exclusion of people in significant need

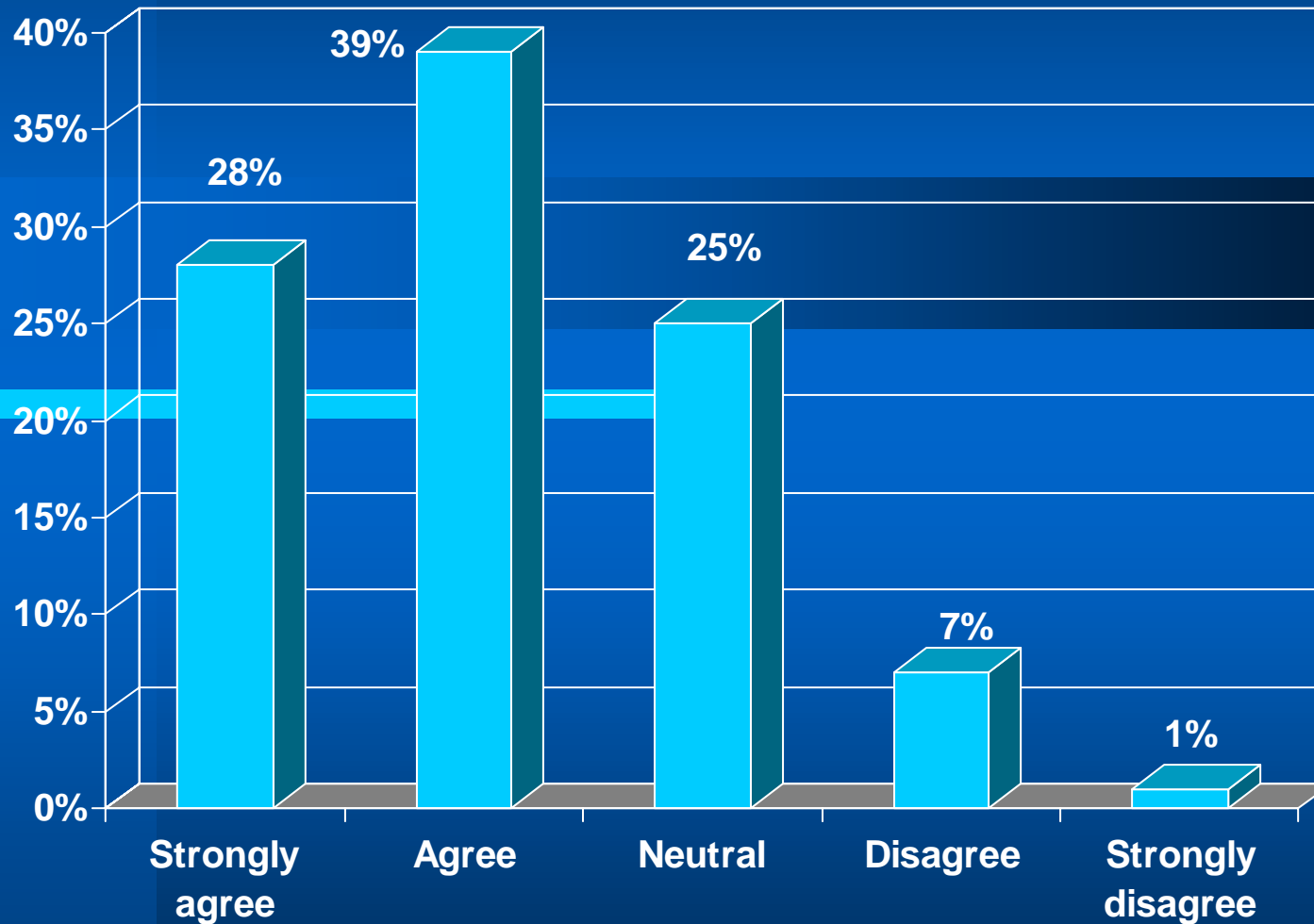
Multiple services involved with individuals
and families with complex and multiple
needs

Barriers to quality services

- Service gaps and inconsistencies
- The needs of some communities are invisible in main stream services
- Recruitment and retention of caring staff across all services
- Government funding regimes
 - the 'silo' approach
 - competitive tendering
- The rise of profit driven welfare service delivery



Proportion agree/disagree statement: "Our clients have more complex needs than last year"



What do we have in common?

Given our diversity:

- Meeting the needs of low income and disadvantaged Australians, and doing what we can to deliver people better quality of life outcomes
- We believe in the power of people and communities to change their own lives

The case for a shared vision: why bother?

- To assist in delivering outcomes for low income and disadvantaged Australians
- To engender a greater understanding from the general community about the Sector
- To identify distinctiveness of the Sector compared to public and private sectors

More reasons for a shared vision...

- To assist in providing solutions to systemic problems that act as barriers to participation
- A greater degree of sharing experiences and practices to address barriers for Australians
- If we are to diminish systematic barriers for Australians then a collective voice is more possible with a shared vision

Elements of a shared vision

The vision could focus on those very familiar themes of:

Justice

- Quality
- Access
- Equity/Fairness
- Cost Effectiveness

Whose shared vision?

- Funders, providers, taxpayers, service users, citizens?
- The challenge for non-profit providers is to show how non-profit service delivery contributes to our communities and delivers good quality of life outcomes.
- The challenge for government is to ensure that whoever the provider, the coverage of the system is fair, the quality of service good, and that the system is cost-effective.

Basis of vision

Ultimately, the vision or consensus should be founded on what is in the best interests of low income and disadvantaged Australians; and grounded in both their lived experience and what we know in serving their needs

Key Barriers

- Commonwealth/State divisions
- Roles and responsibilities of human services systems – i.e. health integration with social security
- Workforce
- Demand
- Funding/resourcing
- Competition within Sector

Challenge # 1: staying grounded

we are organisations embedded in communities

we are efficient and effective but not business, we have a wide reach and mandate but are not the state

biggest current challenge to our identity is co-option

need to get better at articulating our distinctive contribution

Challenge #2: the cult of the individual

Re-embracing of conservatism
(in response to uncertainty?)

Political shift to the right

Consumers before citizens

Shift of focus from the community to the
individual

Shallowing of civil society – a kind of
reverse “tragedy of the commons”

Challenge # 3: conservative government

Government Reform Agenda

- Welfare reform
- Industrial Relations reform
- Micro control of contracts and service delivery – questions re role of the state and the ngo
- National welfare to work agenda built on coercion and punishment rather than on incentives and addressing the structural barriers to participation
- Agenda driven by individualism and minimal government intervention

1.5M social security recipients are still jobless after years of strong economic growth

We must claim our place

we are a critical social partner for government in addressing complex issues like

- poverty and disadvantage
- multiple vulnerability
- the changing shape of the family
- structural ageing
- geographic, locational, demographic, workforce issues

Ways forward

- Need to get active, together
- Need for greater engagement with general public
- Structured Sector dialogue
- Viable pathways – stepped approach
- Commitment – partnerships
- Central focus not about us!