



The St Kilda Inclusion Project

Project summary & key learnings

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September 2011

Introduction

The St Kilda Inclusion Project (SIP) was a place-based initiative resourced by the City of Port Phillip (CoPP), the Department of Human Services (DHS) Southern Metropolitan Region, and the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCP) that commenced in late 2008. The SIP was established to strengthen and support local effort towards greater social inclusion through active government, local resident, agency and business involvement. This document provides a brief summary of the SIP, its activities and their respective outcomes.

The SIP was conceived as a response to the unique St Kilda demographic of high earners alongside a number of disadvantaged groups – including individuals who are in many cases ‘unseen’ and ‘unheard’. For the purpose of the SIP, such individuals or groups included those who had experienced one or more of the following: homelessness, residing in rooming houses, participating in street sex work or affected by drug and alcohol addictions. These individuals and/or groups were considered to be socially excluded on the basis of having limited resources, opportunities and capabilities in order to participate in education and training, employment, unpaid or voluntary work, connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities and/or influence decisions that affect them.

It is recognised that both at a policy and local community level, there is a lot of effort invested in developing initiatives that respond positively to community need. Operating alone each of these activities tends to focus on a narrow range of issues. The SIP has been introduced to help bring a level of coordination, integration and responsiveness to the ideas of residents (both those in low cost housing and more broadly across the community), business, community groups, service providers, and the local council. Building on the learnings and opportunities identified through initiatives such as Neighbourhood Renewal (NR), SIP is place-based, and uses community strengthening approaches that incorporate both top-down and bottom-up elements.

A social inclusion focus was adopted as it was felt that a more holistic response aimed at addressing the root causes of the issues experienced by marginalised residents was needed. It was deemed that a response of this nature would best be served by a partnership arrangement that facilitated opportunities to engage local community members and implement strategies that were responsive to local needs. Connections between DHS, DPCD and CoPP were subsequently made and maintained across the life of the initiative. These partners each agreed to contribute resources in terms of staffing and/or funding in order to support the project activities over a three-year period. Staff resourcing for this project has included two project team members – a project manager and a project officer; as well as other staff from each of the three funding organisations who have supported and guided the project management.

In early 2010, the Department of Health Social Science at Monash University were engaged as the evaluation partners. In December 2010, Themba Consulting was formally sub-contracted by Monash University to continue the evaluation research. A participatory action research approach underpinned the evaluation methodology and provided valuable opportunities for iterative learnings to be integrated into ongoing planning and implementation of SIP activity.

The SIP aimed to create greater opportunities for local St Kilda residents to participate in community life, with a particular focus on those considered most marginalised. The SIP was designed to:

- support, strengthen and facilitate training and participation opportunities for local residents (particularly those living on the margins),
- promote and use service collaboration as a means of identifying, pursuing and trialling shared inclusive activity,
- explore opportunities through the formation of new partnerships, policy formation and awareness raising to assist communities to become more supportive and welcoming for all, adopt a model of community governance to guide and inform project activity,
- facilitate action planning processes that reflect shared local priorities, and
- establish an approach to project evaluation that is characterised by capacity building and collaboration.

The government partnership

This project involves a partnership between two state government departments and a local government. While it is not unusual for collaboration between different levels of government, what is different in this arrangement is the positioning of a state government employee within local government offices in order to progress and achieve a shared agenda around social inclusion. To assist the project with being responsive and appropriate for local needs and wants, the SIP project manager and officer were based within the City of Port Phillip offices at the St Kilda Town Hall.

Elements important for this government partnership include:

- transparent and honest communication based on trust;
- commitment by all organisations and their representatives, to a social inclusion agenda;
- appreciation of the contribution of each partner to the project;
- a valuing of the different perspectives and opportunities afforded through each partner; and
- a willingness and capacity to compromise for the greater good of the project.

In addition, certain professional attributes are required to competently fulfil the roles that are needed to progress the partnership and project. In particular, the roles of the Project Manager and Project Officer were integral to project outcomes. The Project Manager should:

- understand and negotiate the diverse agendas of the funder organisations;
- have the ability to broker relationships;
- be able to work strategically and operationally both with government and community; and
- communicate effectively with all stakeholders.

The Project Officer should:

- have established links within the community (i.e. with local government, agencies and residents);
- have a good foundation in community development practices;
- work in innovative and creative ways that are respectful of an individual's circumstances; and
- have a preparedness to implement strategies without fear of failure.

The governance structure

To guide this project, a governance structure was developed to deliver on community inclusion outcomes. The key stakeholders in the governance structure who contributed to, and guided, the activity of the SIP included an Executive Group, Steering Group, Project Team and Committee. The executive group was comprised of senior representatives from the three funding partners who supported the broader social inclusion agenda of their organisations and oversaw the links between social inclusion and other aspects of their organisations portfolio. This group provided strategic support and senior level engagement as needed throughout the project. The Steering Group was comprised of other representatives from each of the funding partners and were responsible for the broader resource elements of the project and developing cross-programmatic and cross-departmental strategies to address issues raised by the Committee and/or project team. The project team included the SIP Project Manager, the SIP Project Officer and for one year, a Brotherhood of St Laurence trainee. The operational aspects of the SIP, undertaken primarily by this project team, were supported by a Committee which met bi-monthly that was comprised of local residents, local service agency representatives, and state and local government representatives. This Committee was primarily tasked with the following responsibilities:

- exploring opportunities for forming sub groups to help progress activity and action outside regular meetings;
- proactively establishing links and facilitate dialogue across the community, and explore opportunities for aligning the SIP with existing local project activity;
- actively engage in decision making that guides and informs the SIP in a manner that influences project planning, prioritising, development and focus;
- acting as a point of review for funding requests from local agencies and community groups that seek SIP funds to seed new approaches to social inclusion in St Kilda; and
- considering and pursuing partnership and funding opportunities with government, business and philanthropic organisations to meet objectives of the SIP.

To ensure that this committee had adequate representation for marginalised St Kilda residents, it was known that support was required to assist such residents in participating. As the SIP Project Officer reported, committee members would need to be:

“...properly supported and given some sort of proper briefing beforehand ...they had to feel really confident, really connected to the group, empowered, and they had to own it in some way... [and] it would be good for them to go in as a group rather than feeding in individuals. So I was really aware that they couldn't feel like a minority.”

For this reason, a leadership program was developed to improve the overall confidence of marginalised residents and their ability to advocate for themselves and others. Ultimately it was hoped that this would increase participation by people who *“...typically weren't able, or weren't willing to, participate in government structures and broader community life.”* The leadership training program was an asset-based approach that recognised and highlighted the skills, strengths and talents that community members already had, while providing them with the confidence and self-

esteem to voice their thoughts and opinions to hopefully effect change. The program was developed based upon the past experiences of the SIP Project Officer.

During the SIP, two leadership programs were facilitated. While overall objectives were set for the leadership programs, the process of achieving these within each cycle was iterative and reflective of each group of participants. While differences in the names of each weekly session are shown in the table below, the same topics were covered in both leadership programs. The flexibility this was highly valued and allowed the facilitators to work with the groups in less confined and more organic ways during each session:

“Everyone who comes in brings ideas and different passions and that shapes the direction you are going to go into.”

Table 1: Overview of the leadership training program cycles

Leadership cycle 1	Leadership cycle 2
Outline & expectations	Outline & expectations
Managing conflict, communication skills	Managing conflict, listening & boundaries
Understanding own personal communication style	Introduction to public speaking
Learning how to write a presentation	How to give & receive feedback
Public speaking	Group discussion, impromptu speaking & presentations
Contributing respectfully to a meeting	Group discussion, impromptu speaking & presentations
Impromptu speaking	Group discussion, impromptu speaking & presentations
Presentation & graduation	Group discussion, impromptu speaking & presentations
	Presentation & graduation

A total of 18 St Kilda residents successfully completed the leadership training programs with an additional three people unable to complete the programs due to a variety of personal reasons.

The impact of the leadership training programs for participants was evaluated through questionnaires, focus groups and key informant interviews. As a result of the programs, the participants and group facilitators consistently reported:

- improvements in participant confidence and self-esteem;
- personal growth and development; and
- greater opportunities for individual and community benefit.

This is highlighted by the following quotes:

“When I started this group I found it ... exceptionally hard to take a compliment. It was like, I’m crappy – yeah alright – like talking about deflecting off to other people – I’d always find a way to throw that conversation – whereas now I’m starting to feel really good about myself. I actually like me and I can take a compliment without wanting to hide – I actually believe it,

which is fine, but feels great and I don't want that to change, so yeah, I would just like to say thank you for that – I feel good about me for the first time ever.”

“I got great pleasure out of [name removed] being on the course and noticing changes in him and the type of conversation you just had before reflected in what I believe was a great advancement in his self esteem, or whatever it may be. I thought other people within the group got a lot out of it – personal challenges – standing up in front of a group. Myself, I found out that I like giving speeches, although at times they could have been a bit better.”

“... I look [at] it as an opportunity for myself to benefit and let the community benefit from what I've experienced and now that I've passed with flying colours... and now that I'm sort of in the know and involved in the community participation, so to speak ... it's a real personal reward for me to be able to you know benefit and benefit the community with other ...members of the community.”

A number of elements were identified through the evaluation that were key to the successful development and implementation of these programs. These include that:

- participants must be at the right stage of readiness for recruitment and engagement in the program;
- resourcing must be provided to assist participants to engage and remain involved in the group are provided (e.g. food, public transport fares, gift vouchers for retail outlets);
- the setting must provide an indication to participants that government is validating their views and needs (e.g. the local town hall);
- the layout, group dynamics, material resources and opportunities for non-judgemental discussion and reflection are critical to the facilitation of the program;
- the time frame of the program (in terms of the length of program and weekly time commitment) must not impose on participant's everyday activities, and should not go on for so long that it is a disincentive to participate initially or reduces the chances of participants successfully completing the program;
- achievements of participants must be formally recognised through graduation ceremonies that enable the participant to demonstrate their learnings to a broad audience including government representatives and their family and friends;
- the program cannot be an endpoint, rather that it must be a platform to other opportunities that participants can choose to become involved in; and
- that group facilitators must be appropriately skilled in working with individuals with a range of complex needs.

Following the leadership program, one participant applied for a one-year CoPP and Brotherhood of St Laurence traineeship. This traineeship provided opportunities for this person to obtain a formal qualification while having on-the-job training at the CoPP. The formal qualification was a Certificate IV in Community Services Work which aims to provide education so that recipients are able to design

and deliver programs that enhance individual and group well-being. The traineeship model required that the trainee be released from work and paid the appropriate wages to attend any training and assessment specified for the qualification. The on-the-job component of the traineeship assisted in providing experience in tasks to supplement the formal qualification. In regard to the SIP traineeship, the on-the-job tasks for the trainee included:

- assisting in the administration of the leadership program including attending as a peer educator and acting as a point of contact for participants;
- attending planning/evaluation/training forums to provide input into the content;
- assisting in the creation of resources that can be used by the broader community to encourage and support social inclusion;
- assisting with data entry;
- developing a system to contact and disseminate information about the SIP results;
- contributing to the SIP evaluation process;
- being involved in sharing experiences of SIP through presentations;
- assisting other community development activities that emerged; and
- other tasks as required by the SIP project team.

In accordance with an active learning model, these tasks were adapted and modified as required throughout the traineeship. The cost of the SIP traineeship included wages from the SIP funding, funding from the training provider, and a wage subsidy from Centrelink.

For the trainee, the impact of these opportunities have resulted in significant changes in his life - - he reports that interacting with people is more of a joy now; he is able to articulate his thoughts and feelings; he is learning to trust again; he now washes, shaves and wears clean clothes; he eats more food, more regularly; and he is enjoying learning how to assist people with what they are interested in. The trainee further states: *"I have lived in a rooming house for two years and my normal way of dealing with things is to scream at the junkies, bullies, opportunists or whoever they are and now I am calmer, I'm thinking about what they are talking about. At my rooming house there is a very stable environment now - - people say good morning and we catch up with each other, look out for each other."* For further detail, see Case Study 1.

More broadly, participants of the SIP leadership program have become involve in other training and community service activities. A key learning from the leadership program has been that it is vitally important that there are other opportunities for participation and application of learnings for the participants.

"...you have to have other projects to lead people into, you have to be continuously thinking about what can so-and-so do, what can I link them into, what is there for people to do ... to keep them engaged – that's a really big part of it."

Examples of opportunities for participants (see Table 2) have included a mix of both short and long-term activities. As one participant reported "...it was just really nice to be offered to be a part

community events.” Another reported that there “...were many more opportunities available that I wouldn’t have known about ... if I hadn’t been involved in SIP.”

Table 2: Other opportunities for the application of learnings

Education/training	Community Service	Connection to other SIP activities	Employment (other)
Certificate IV Community Development Course at RMIT	Delivery of pamphlets for CoPP	Audio tour project	Carer for the elderly
Research training	Focus groups (e.g. social justice)	The Torch – A whole new world project	Opportunities at Inner South Community Health Service
Computer course	Judging role in disability writing competition	SIP committee	Opportunities at Port Phillip Community Group
SIP traineeship	Acknowledgement to country at various events	Selection committee for the SIP evaluation tender	
	Mentoring	Consultant for Site Unseen	
	Launch of the Great Wall of St Kilda	Anti-graffiti mural	
	Environmental on-tram research for COPP		

The planning of leadership programs for improved inclusion need to consider the next steps for participants; “... the training has to be built with more than just the training in mind ... the six months after the training has to be integrated into the design of the training.”

Supporting local agencies

The SIP supported local service providers and agencies through funding and providing opportunities for networking and connections with the community and government. Particular focus was given to supporting social infrastructure development and work that brought stakeholders together to explore shared work in responding to issues and opportunities emerging from pockets across the community where extreme disadvantage is known. The agencies that have derived the most benefit from the SIP are those with whom there were existing relationships with the CoPP prior to the commencement of this project. Such organisations have reported the benefits of working with the SIP to include:

- networking and linkages between staff and organisations;
- involvement in the ongoing development of the St Kilda Social Inclusion Centre;
- provision of contacts at CoPP to assist with social housing;
- flexibility and responsiveness to a broad range of issues;
- greater opportunities for funding (both directly and through relationships brokered by the SIP team);
- maintaining a focus on social inclusion in the region and across Council;

- having access to human, financial and infrastructure resources to support projects and activities; and
- more direct relationships with different levels of government.

To improve the working relationship with the SIP, organisations reported wanting greater:

- awareness about the resources, purpose and opportunities provided for their organisation by the SIP;
- understanding the role of the SIP team;
- information about the work being undertaken by the SIP;
- numbers of SIP team members (so they can be more visible/involved with local networks); and
- time to develop and build on networks and projects established and to begin new projects in collaboration with the SIP.

The direct funding provided by the SIP involved seed funding for projects that met pre-defined criteria that helped meet the overall objectives of the SIP. This seeding opportunity was available as part of \$300,000 of flexible funding available to the SIP. This flexible funding arrangement enabled the SIP to explore and test an approach to working with local outreach and support groups that sought to pilot new, or add value to, their existing activities. Local community agencies were supportive of this approach, as it provided them directly with access to seeding funds for the local practice and promotion of social inclusion.

Access to seeding grants was promoted through the SIP newsletter, through word of mouth and in meetings. Additionally, the DPCD encouraged organisations enquiring about funding opportunities to contact the SIP team as a first port of call. All interested organisations were required to submit a one-page expression of interest to access up to \$5000 of funding. The value of these grants for organisations was the flexibility in how the funds could be used and when they could be accessed. Additionally, there was no limit on the number of grant applications that organisations could submit. Fifteen projects were seeded across eight organisations; with many such projects attracting other investments of cash and in-kind contributions above and beyond that provided through the SIP. These projects differed in their focus, duration and intent. Each focused on one or more of the key elements that underpin social inclusion; participation, capacity building, enhancing access and providing opportunities for voice. A list of the funded projects is provided in Table 3.

It is clear that for individuals engaged in funded activities, the experience was positive and for some led to a greater sense of inclusion and social connectedness. This is reflected by the following comments:

“...it encourages socialability - people live on their own and spend all their time alone – so this is great for them – it gives them some social interaction to reduce isolation.”

“Engaging in a positive, healthy activity provided individuals with a sense of accomplishment and pride in knowing they were making a positive, small step that was good for their health and well-being.”

“...the availability of fresh food – most people on pensions don’t allow themselves that.”

Table 3: List of projects that have received seeding funds from the SIP, to the end of January 2011

Seeding project title	Agency	Project description	Focus of project	Duration of activity	SIP seeding amount	Other contributions (\$/in-kind)
Art Makers	Art Makers	Project to support marginalised local St Kilda artists in having the confidence and capacity to sell their works at local markets	Capacity building, participation, access	Ongoing	\$3,000	Staff coordination
Linking neighbours	City of Port Phillip	Establishment of a register that creates connections between neighbours and facilitates excursions and meals out	Participation, access	Ongoing	\$1,500	Staff coordination
Netball team	St Kilda Gatehouse	Providing marginalised women the opportunity to play competitive sport	Participation, access	Ongoing	\$3,000	Staff coordination, volunteer coordination, vehicle for transport
Project navigate	St Kilda Gatehouse	Assisting marginalised women to navigate the service system	Capacity building, access	Ongoing	\$2,000	Staff coordination
Outlandish	Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services	Assisting marginalised women to develop esteem, confidence and pathways for personal development through group environmental activity	Capacity building, participation	Ongoing	\$5,000	\$48,500 coordination salary, on-costs, administration and vehicle
Community kitchen (see Case Study 2)	Port Phillip Community Group	Assisting community members and tenants within a public estate to prepare and share communal meals	Capacity building, participation, access	Ongoing	\$1,500	Participant donations, venue, volunteer coordination
Espy tea and chat	Port Phillip Community Group	Encourage social interaction and engagement in older adult residents of local public housing	Participation	Ongoing	\$2,000	Participant donations, venue, volunteer coordination
Making it work	Port Phillip Community Group	Progressing facility management and governance planning for the proposed St Kilda Social Inclusion Centre.	Capacity building	One-off	\$5,000	DHS graduate project participation, staff participation
Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre	Port Phillip Community Group	Providing 10 new gym and 14 new swimming, memberships of twelve months duration for marginalised St Kilda residents	Participation, access	One-off	\$3,000	Subsidised entry at MSAC, staff coordination
Arts mentor project	St Kilda Youth Service	Connecting St Kilda youth with local creative community through support from a professional arts mentor	Capacity building, participation	Ongoing	\$2,500	Business sponsorship, philanthropic investment
Camping out	St Kilda Youth Service	Providing team building and challenge exercises through a camp for disadvantaged VCAL students	Capacity building, participation, access	One-off	\$3,000	Staff coordination
Indigenous documentary	St Kilda Youth Service	Creating a short film to record the experiences of St Kilda's Indigenous parkies	Participation, voice	One-off	\$5,000	\$3,000 from DHS, \$5,000 from CoPP

Seeding project title	Agency	Project description	Focus of project	Duration of activity	SIP seeding amount	Other contributions (\$/in-kind)
Recorded oral history	St Kilda Youth Service	Development of an internet resources that gives voice to older marginalised people	Participation, voice	One-off	\$5,000	\$3,000 from CoPP
Whole new world (see Case Study 3)	The Torch	Development and reading of a comedic play about experiences of marginalised people	Capacity building, participation, access, voice	One-off	\$5,000	Funding provided by other partners – no further detail
Women's art access studio	Creative Ministries Network	Providing a dedicated printing workshop for marginalised women	Capacity building, participation	Ongoing	\$2,000	\$1,000 CoPP, other ongoing funding post July 2011

Engaging with the local community

To meet the objectives of the SIP, a number of activities have been created to encourage greater participation among individuals in the community. These include arts and training based programs. The model that underpins the development and implementation of these activities is a community development approach. It incorporates elements of the arts, social connection, participation, education and engagement to create opportunities for the target group of marginalised residents of St Kilda. The model is predicated on the idea that people in marginalised situations would be best served by a well-informed community that understands their predicament, supports them and provides real opportunities to build skills and self-confidence. In this way the SIP activities were based on the assets or strengths of individuals and the community.

Arts programs

The SIP used arts programs to promote cultural diversity, respect, tolerance, elicit feelings of belonging and provide opportunities for people to communicate their views. Arts based programs are known to:

“...break down barriers and provide a way for disparate groups, that have little in common, to come together to work on a particular task. Programs of this nature enable participants to be less self conscious and more willing to talk about their own background and issues because it is a less challenging and threatening environment.”

The arts program was comprised of four activities:

- Jackson Street Mural;
- ‘Looking for a girl’ audio tour;
- Oral history and interactive website; and
- Site UnSeen.

Jackson Street Mural

The Jackson Street activity involved the painting of a mural over six days that was themed around ‘belonging in St Kilda’. The purpose of this activity was for community engagement and initial conversations about the SIP. A community artist led this activity with food and drink available for participants each day. Participants in the activity could choose to paint something on the mural that symbolised St Kilda for them, and/or provide their views on a large banner about what it means to belong and feel welcome in St Kilda. A core group of five people participated in at least three days of the activity and these participants organically took leadership roles by engaging passers-by in conversation about the mural and the themes associated with it. A total of 77 people participated in the activity.

Learnings from this activity included that:

- community ownership can be created through participation in arts activities;
- the coupling of an easily accessible activity with a very visible end result can help create space for sharing ideas and aspirations;
- the flexibility of the lead artist is really important as engagement can occur at different times and as such strict timelines are difficult to follow;

- a second facilitator is needed at such events (another artist or worker) to help with assisting participants with both the mural and the banner (if both are included);
- a nearby toilet facility for participants is needed;
- a risk management plan needs to be developed to support facilitators in the judgement of whether or not people are able to participate in the activity in a safe manner for themselves and the other participants;
- further consultations and activities of this kind can be used as vehicles to achieve engagement, participation and community strengthening; and
- providing activities and spaces that allow marginalised people to connect to the broader community in an informal and co-operative way is important.

‘Looking for a Girl?’ Audio Tour

The ‘Looking for a Girl?’ audio tour gives voice to individuals to tell the story of survival on the streets. Still in development, the recordings for this tour have been captured with sound mixing underway and promotional material being designed.

Oral history and interactive website

This interactive website is being designed to capture the voice of older marginalised gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (GLBTI) individuals who have experienced exclusion and now find themselves living in rooming houses, local nursing homes and the Inkerman Housing estate. A team was established to draft a questionnaire for capturing information and stories to provide a deeper level of understanding of the GLBTI experience and history in St Kilda.

Site UnSeen

Site UnSeen is a multimedia simulation designed to increase public understanding and support for people who experience exclusion and homelessness. This program (to be launched in September 2011) will encourage discussion, debate and advocacy in understanding and addressing homelessness and exclusion within the community. Audience members will be given an experience of becoming ‘homeless’ in an inter-active environment using custom built installations, images, sound-scapes, text and architectural designs. This will provide the audience with both an insight into the physical realities of sleeping out, as well as the emotional landscape including fear, prejudice, uncertainty, resilience and wry humour. The authenticity of Site UnSeen is ensured by the involvement of up to 20 people who have experienced homelessness to develop the script and map for the Site UnSeen simulation. These individuals are also being employed to help create the installations, work on content for a website, to be hosts for the production, and to help with other aspects of creating the production.

Training programs

In addition to the leadership and traineeship programs, a further three training programs have been developed within the auspices of the SIP. These programs were developed in response to specific issues or needs and include the Gatwick concierge training, the Parkies concierge training and the community researcher training.

The Gatwick concierge training

The Gatwick Hotel is a private rooming house in Fitzroy Street, St Kilda. In response to issues with non-residents of the rooming house, a concierge training program was initiated to provide security staff for the premises. This training entailed a three day program for four residents already working at the Gatwick as well as three management staff. The training focussed on communication and conflict resolution. Following this training, a number of procedural and process changes were implemented at the Gatwick. The outcomes of this training are presented below:

- Outcomes for participants – Improvements in confidence and attitudes over the three day period with realisation that they had great ideas and experiences to contribute to the discussions.
- Outcomes for Gatwick community – Despite an initial increase in property damage and threats as a result of new procedures being implemented, managers reported overall reductions in non-residents trying to access the building, police attendance and vandalism. Residents reported feeling safer and a general improved atmosphere.
- Outcomes for Gatwick management – Reductions in stress and increased confidence to take holidays/breaks from the hotel.

While the concierge training delivered some positive outcomes for the Gatwick community, addressing systemic issues (e.g. violence, substance abuse, sex work) in Fitzroy Street were beyond the capabilities of this training and since the training was conducted in 2009, no concierge program is in effect at the Gatwick.

The Parkies concierge training

This concierge program was initiated to include the parkies as hosts for the Yalukit Willam Ngargee Festival which was held in the O'Donnell Gardens. The focus of this training was also on communication and conflict resolution. Funded by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, thirteen people attended the training, with 12 working at the festival. Positive outcomes for this training were noted, with only minor incidents reported at the Festival, all of which were handled well by the event marshals. The process instilled a sense of ownership for the parkies over the space and good will, with the CoPP receiving a lot of positive feedback and approaches to book the parkies for future events.

Community research project

Community research projects detail the views of local community members. Within the auspices of the SIP such data was collected through a peer-to-peer approach. The advantages of peer-to-peer research include the provision of opportunities for participation, skill development and confidence building for data collectors; and it allows community members to express views they may not otherwise share with academic researchers.

For this to be effective training in research techniques is required for the community researchers. The SIP provided training for such purposes. To conduct peer-to-peer research, nine participants of the SIP leadership programs completed further training facilitated by the SIP. The purpose of this training was to facilitate skill development and confidence building. The research training program

utilised an active learning model that was tailored to meet the needs of the group from week to week. The program was facilitated over a six week period.

The topics covered each week were generally established however only the first week of the course had a pre-planned agenda. The facilitators of the training sessions met after each session to assess how it went and then designed the next week's agenda. The feedback provided by the participants each session were turned into notes and handed out and discussed at the subsequent session to cement the learning. Formal information on research techniques was provided and practical exercises were designed to hone participants' interview skills. Topics covered during these six weeks included a) developing rapport, b) listening and asking questions, c) taking notes, and d) managing people's reactions including your own.

Living in St Kilda research

The aim of the 'Living in St Kilda' research was to gather information about what social inclusion means on a practical level for marginalised community members. This information was intended to feed into the aims and activities of the SIP. The research was designed to capture the voice of marginalised groups such as the homeless, as these community members are often missed in traditional data collection methodologies.

Participants in this training felt as though they were positively contributing by helping to give other marginalised community members a voice through the community survey. They were often surprised by how much "*strangers*" were willing and wanting to share with them and were proud of the role they had in passing that information on to decision makers. Despite their growth in confidence and public speaking, trainees reported initial feelings of apprehension about collecting the community research data. An important aspect of addressing their anxiety was completing the data collection in pairs and matching trainees to places they knew or were comfortable with.

Community members were thoughtful and prepared to go into depth when surveyed; they welcomed the opportunity to contribute their knowledge and they were grateful to be asked their opinion. However, they expressed a desire that this project would be different from others that surveyed them but never provided feedback on the results.

While this community research project has been useful in providing an opportunity for community members to have a voice, it is unclear at this time how these findings have been used to inform programs related to social inclusion in St Kilda.

Engaging with local business

To assist the SIP with achieving its broader outcomes for social inclusion across St Kilda, local businesses have been engaged to support and strengthen existing activity, provide opportunities for sustainability and to create a stronger whole community approach to social inclusion. To achieve this, \$60,000 has been invested to establish a 12 month strategic business engagement partnership with Think HQ, a local consultancy firm with specific expertise in this area. Think HQ has developed a number of strategies in consultation with the SIP stakeholders to link business and community organisations. The business engagement strategies included:

1. Aligning local business with local project using an initiative known as 'Lifting the Lid'. This involved: i) the personalised matching of the needs of individual businesses and community

groups who have received SIP seeding funding, and ii) the implementation of a communications strategy to share stories of the success and challenges of addressing social inclusion in St Kilda. The communications strategy involves creating:

- a. a brand (look/logo) to represent the individuals and organisations involved in improving social inclusion in St Kilda that will accompany all materials and activities conducted under the 'Lifting the Lid' umbrella and that can be displayed by businesses and community groups who are involved,
 - b. a business/community portal within the existing Port Phillip Gives website to help connect businesses and community organisations, provide case studies and stories and publicise events and news,
 - c. network opportunities and connections at business breakfasts facilitated by both the Business and Community Development units of the City of Port Phillip Council,
 - d. publicity in local media (including the CoPP Diversity magazine and local Leader newspaper), and
 - e. opportunities to help businesses that contribute to greater social inclusion in St Kilda to be recognised by advocating for a new category to be introduced in the existing City of Port Phillip Business Awards.
2. Creating a sustainable leadership program by identifying and brokering opportunities for program participants to apply their learnings and through securing in-kind sponsorships for the program.
 3. Securing genuine partnerships (that may include the provision of cash, in-kind, volunteering and management support) for the Site Unseen project and developing a communications strategy that provides sufficient, reputational gains for corporate partners.
 4. Organising and facilitating an informal workshop on the process of philanthropic grant applications to support the building of philanthropic connections for the proposed St Kilda Inclusion Centre.
 5. Leveraging existing CoPP events/connections for sponsorships relating to events such as the St Kilda Festival and the Film Festival and promoting the SIP business engagement activity within the Business Development and Community Development units of the CoPP.

At the time of publication of this report, the impact of these strategies had yet to be ascertained and thus key learnings for engaging with business had not yet been determined.

Sustainability and transition planning

Since 2010, stakeholders have focused on sustainability and transition planning. This focus has been underpinned by an understanding that social inclusion needs will continue beyond the completion of the SIP project in 2011. As such work effort has been directed to exploring opportunities for attracting new, or reorienting existing resources to continue the social inclusion agenda currently shared by SIP partners and a broader cohort of stakeholders. Proposed sustainability and transition planning intentionally targets embedding value adding activity into existing government and community structures. Areas of key focus for this planning include:

- Sharing the learnings;

- Participation linked to enterprise and lifelong learning;
- Business engagement;
- Social inclusion within activity centres;
- Indigenous infrastructure and connections;
- Shared approaches to responding to issues on public housing estates; and
- Seeding new forms of activity.

Summary of key learnings

Following is a summary of the key learnings associated with the St Kilda inclusion partnership and project. These learnings can be applied to other place based social inclusion initiatives.

Overall project learnings

- While a project may initially be developed on a need or problem, a strength or asset based approach to community development can lead to enhanced social inclusion outcomes.
- It is imperative that at the outset of project planning, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely objectives are developed and agreed upon by all partners.
- Flexibility of structures, processes and activities enables responsiveness to opportunities that promote social inclusion.

Key learnings for the government partnership

- A successful partnership is dependent upon the recognition of, and willingness to work within, the diverse philosophies and approaches offered by each partner.
- Each partner should have a clearly delineated role and responsibilities from the outset of the partnership.
- The project manager in such partnerships should have excellent project management skills, especially for facilitation and brokering.
- The project officer in such partnerships should have localised knowledge and expertise in community development (including relationships with agencies and local residents).

Key learnings for the governance structure

- A multi-layered governance structure enables both strategic dialogue and operational guidance of social inclusion activities.
- Projects that include community based committees need to allow the committee to determine its role, responsibilities and the levels of participation among its members.
- When a community committee feels its contribution is valued, this provides projects with a structure that supports effective community consultation.

Key learnings for supporting local agencies

- An important first step is acknowledging the existing networks and activities in the local area. Activities that are implemented should complement or add value to these existing activities.

- Networking opportunities require an investment of time to build meaningful relationships to effectively support social inclusion activities.
- Communication with local service agencies and the broader community needs to be constant, up-to-date and provided through a range of mediums.

Key learnings for engaging with the local community

- Engagement approaches need to be sensitive to individual circumstances. To ensure ongoing engagement, when community is consulted feedback must be provided. The results of engagement conversations need to be translated into future action.
- Arts programs promote opportunities for marginalised and mainstream community members to socially connect in non-threatening spaces. They also give voice to highlight issues confronting marginalised community members to improve understanding of individual circumstances.
- Training activities provide opportunities for influencing decision making by building or releasing the capacity of marginalised community members to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. This is a fundamental component of a socially inclusive community. Training activities achieve this by improving the confidence, skill and knowledge of participants and by being vehicles for self-awareness, broader community awareness and to further training and/or employment opportunities.



Case study

“...someone could see something in me that could be developed and nurtured.”

Ant Bridgeman

In 2009, Anthony 'Ant' Bridgeman had a chance encounter with Robyn Szechtman (the SIP Project Officer) at the Jackson Street Mural Project. It was a conversation that would take Ant on a journey of self discovery and lead to opportunities that he had long been awaiting. He admits *"...you just never know when there is going to be a really, really good experience around the corner."* Ant had attempted study before and had wanted to return to study and when offered the opportunity to participate in the SIP leadership training, it was an opportunity he was ready to accept.

But starting a course with people you don't know and don't initially trust is a daunting feeling. Ant says *"...we didn't realise that we were with like minded people until about a third or halfway through and there are trust issues and once we realised that we are all here to learn and to benefit from learning, it makes trusting a lot easier."* With the support of two CoPP workers and his fellow leadership training peers, Ant successfully completed the training.

Not only is Ant proud of his own achievements but he takes pride in seeing the growth that has occurred in his fellow leadership training graduates. Ant says *"...we have stopped being down and outs – we all thought we would be down and out for the rest of our lives."* But Ant has noticed that as a result of the leadership training, people are remembering and rediscovering what they were interested in. He says *"...people are being really assertive about doing that and if they get knock backs which does happen, there is not that instantaneous combustion and anger."* He further adds *"... people are being assertive, they are actually listening, there is a lot of reflecting, and there is also the willingness to not let other people put them down."*

For Ant, the changes in his own life have been considerable - - he says interacting with people is more of a joy now; he is able to articulate his thoughts and feelings; he is learning to trust again; he now washes, shaves and wears clean clothes; he eats more food, more regularly; and he is enjoying learning how to assist people with what they are interested in. Ant adds *"I have lived in a rooming house for two years and my normal way of dealing with things is to scream at the junkies, bullies, opportunists or whoever they are and now I am calmer, I'm thinking about what they are talking about. At my rooming house there is a very stable environment now - - people say good morning and we catch up with each other, look out for each other."*

In 2010, Ant commenced a Brotherhood of St Laurence traineeship with the CoPP. He admits that he was *"...really surprised to be offered the chance - - that someone could see something in me that could be developed and nurtured."* Nearly six months into the training, Ant reflects that he likes *"...the idea of working with like minded people – I really love the idea that people can help each other, that everyone has time for each other. I like the idea that it is Community Development and arts orientated – that way I stay true to the things that I am interested in as well."* Ant says *"...I really wanted to go to school and through the traineeship I get to do a Cert IV in Community Services; I get to train in Community Development with Robyn and Anita and some really awesome people... I trust these people and I had really major issues with trust, so I knew just through the year and a half that I had spent with Robyn what this place was like and that it was an ok place to work at."*



St Kilda Community Kitchen

Service agency: Port Phillip Community Group

Nature of the activity: This is a weekly Community Kitchen within a St Kilda public housing property that is aimed at supporting participants to prepare a communal meal to share together. This social-focussed activity is targeted at both the broader local community and the public housing tenants from the property where it is held.

Objective: To break down preconceptions and stigma surrounding public housing, and open them up to the broader community, while also providing an affordable and accessible mainstream social activity to public housing tenants right on their estate.

The SIP seeding grant provided: for initial set-up costs (cooking utensils) and ongoing staple foods to be purchased.

Awards: Awarded the 2010 Civic Project of the Year Award from the CoPP, runners-up in the 2011 Institute of Public Administration of Australia Awards for innovation and service delivery.

Links to the SIP goals: This project aligns with the SIP focus that seeks to create new connections between local St Kilda residents, particularly through bridging the gap between the general community and public housing tenants. This Community Kitchen provides an opportunity for social

interaction with the general community within a comfortable environment that is still within the public housing property. In this way, the program offers appeal to marginalised and socially isolated public housing tenants in a friendly and open manner, without the need for assertive engagement. Rather, it aims to welcome residents to engage with the general community through the shared experience of preparing and sharing a meal that will seek to break down barriers between these two groups. This project represents a truly fresh and strengthened approach to community inclusion that draws on the existing assets and needs in the local community and brings them together in a creative and innovative way to bridge two social groups. Attendees originally contributed \$5.00 as a participation fee, however now they can attend and participate at no cost. Weekly fresh food is donated by SecondBite.

Impact: Over 2010, an estimated total of approximately 50 local community members attended this Community Kitchen; on any given week approximately 12 people attend. Individuals who attend the Community Kitchen do so:

- for social interaction (meeting new and interesting people),
- to support people they know who attend (sense of community that is fostered),
- because they like cooking,
- to build up their confidence and cooking skills,
- because it is convenient (live close/within estate),
- because they like helping people, and
- because of the atmosphere (music and good company).

The benefits of this Community Kitchen as described by participants include:

- “the interaction of people cooking, promoting healthy cooking and eating and food choices, the availability of fresh food – most people on pensions don’t allow themselves that”
- “an escape from home”
- “when here like this as a group – you’re all family, that’s how I see it”
- “it encourages socialability - people live on their own and spend all their time alone – so this is great for them – it gives them some social interaction to reduce isolation”

Evaluator reflections: The value of this Community Kitchen to those participating is clear upon attendance at one of the evenings and observation of the interactions that are occurring there. This Community Kitchen provides a space that values diversity, accepts people as they are and supports them in participating in ways that they are comfortable, with no expectations and no demands; the spirit and essence of this aren’t necessarily measureable but this in no way minimises their importance and value, especially within the context of a project designed to improve social inclusion. The opportunities provided by the Community Kitchen allow participants to garnish what they want from it; social interaction, the atmosphere, cooking skills, fresh produce, getting away from home, etc., and the ability to do that in a space that is comfortable and without pressure helps this to occur. Even down to the most fundamental element of the Kitchen – the decision of what to cook - participants can choose to be or not be involved in those discussions and the eventual decision. The number of first-time participants at the Community Kitchen when we visited indicates the continued value of this activity for St Kilda residents. Participants who have been attending the Community Kitchen over a longer period of time have started to take their own leadership roles in the activity – introducing people to each other, explaining what is happening, leading various aspects (setting the table, cutting the food, cooking the food, etc); all of which add together to create a welcoming environment which residents are starting to take ownership for and responsibility of.

Case study 3 – A Whole New World

Service agency: The Torch

Nature of the activity: The Whole New World project was a community cultural development program which involved a comedic play about the world of recovering drug addicts and alcoholics. The play was written by nationally recognised playwright Graham Pitts and directed by similarly renowned Artistic Director Maude Davey. To do this, they worked in close conjunction and collaboration with a group of individuals who had experienced the stigma and social judgement that



can come with being a recovering drug addict and/or alcoholic. Whole New World contained deeply personal real accounts from recovering drug addicts and alcoholics, however the play was set within a fictional framework to satisfy both an artistic vision and practical requirements. The play script was developed alongside community consultation between September 2009 and August 2010. A rehearsal for the public readings of the play was held in August 2010, with the first public reading held at Theatre Works, St Kilda on September 19, 2010, the second public reading for NAB staff in the Melbourne CBD on September 21, 2010, and a third public reading within the CoPP was held in November 2010 following a slight script rewrite.

Objective: To create a strong, new theatre work that challenged the myths and stigmas of alcohol and drug addiction, through:

- the active involvement of individuals recovering from drug and alcohol addiction in the creative development process,
- increasing skills and confidence of these individuals in the theatrical process (creative writing, acting skills),
- increasing opportunities for participants to consider the creative industry as a possible career pathway, and
- increasing cross-sector partnerships to have greater reach to the ‘unconverted’ audience.

Links to the SIP goals: The Whole New World project used a creative process to engage marginalised residents of St Kilda and support them to share their stories and contribute to approaches to challenge common social myths and stigmas relating to drug and alcohol addictions.

The SIP seeding grant provided: Two Australian actors to be engaged to rehearse with the SIP group and be part of the public readings; this decision was based upon group feedback. These two professional actors worked with five SIP leadership group members to: a) enhance their acting and reading skills, b) motivate by sharing their experiences in the arts industry, and c) inspire ongoing involvement in the arts as a tool for social engagement and change. Additionally the funding was used to offer a thank you to the SIP leadership group participants and to offset any incidental costs that they may have incurred to get to weekly meetings at The Torch and the public readings. The SIP seeding grant enabled The Torch to offer these participants a small cash payment honorarium.