

# Impact at Scale

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Social Ventures Australia acknowledges and pays respect to the past and present traditional custodians and elders of this country on which we work.

## About Social Ventures Australia

SVA is one of Australia's most innovative social impact organisations. For more than 20 years, we've been finding innovative solutions to entrenched social problems and speeding-up the rate of positive change.

We help institutions think differently, we help redesign systems and work hand-in-hand with our passionate partners and communities to take real action and make positive social change. We use our broad outlook, transformational thinking and trusted voice to fight against inequality.

### Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Social Ventures Australia. Contributors from SVA included Divya Roy, Nicholas Perini, Joshua Wang, Patrick Flynn, Adam Davids and Suzie Riddell.

We thank the many other people inside and outside our organisation who have provided valuable feedback and advice on the work, in particular the support provided by **Social Finance**.

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## Foreword

Achieving impact at scale is a goal that many in the social impact sector strive to achieve. Impact at scale fascinates me. It certainly drives my passion in my role at Social Ventures Australia. I really enjoy working with our team and our partners on systems change across early years, education, employment, housing and beyond.

Impact at scale is tough going. It requires perseverance and problem solving, a variety of perspectives and approaches and it is a collaborative effort. This paper offers a contribution to the conversation about the impact at scale challenge. We hope it helps people across the social impact sector to develop new perspectives and build a shared vocabulary.

Collaboration, with thought partners and the social sector, has made this paper possible. We want to share our heartfelt thanks with the many social purpose leaders who have generously shared their perspectives and ideas with us, including at our Impact at Scale Summit in September 2023. The Summit convened 100 leaders from across the public, private, philanthropic and non-government sectors, and their feedback on our insights was invaluable.

We also want to thank the organisations who generously shared their journeys towards impact at scale through this paper's case studies and in its supplementary materials. We're also grateful for Social Finance's collaboration and feedback. Social Finance is an organisation which continues to be at the forefront of this topic, so their support was vital. Our special thanks go to the Paul Ramsay Foundation and AMP Foundation for their ongoing partnership.

We aim to build on this paper in future work and will continue contributing to the broader discussion around how we can collectively work towards impact at scale in Australia. We hope you find this paper insightful. We know it isn't perfect and we would love your feedback so we can continue to collectively develop our thinking about this important topic.

Many thanks,

**Suzie Riddell**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Social Ventures Australia



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# 01.

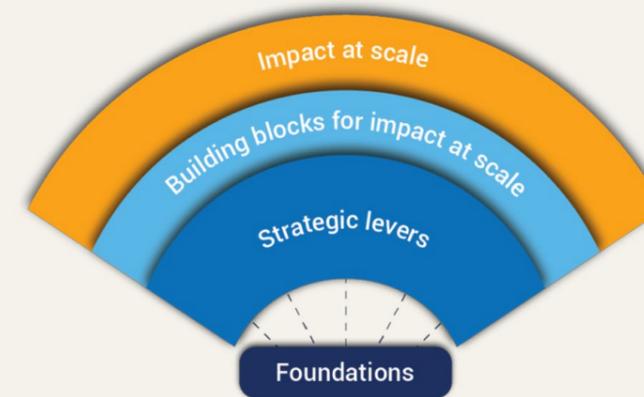
## Executive Summary

We look forward to hearing your feedback on this paper, as well as your experiences of using and testing the concepts within it. We are also eager to continue engaging in conversations about impact at scale, shaping how we continue to collectively work towards this aspiration.



### Defining impact at scale

“ Impact at scale is the lasting change in people’s lives and society we see when products, services or practices sustainably expand their reach, when systems embed change or when society and culture shift their perspective. ”  
*Social Finance, 2021<sup>1</sup>*



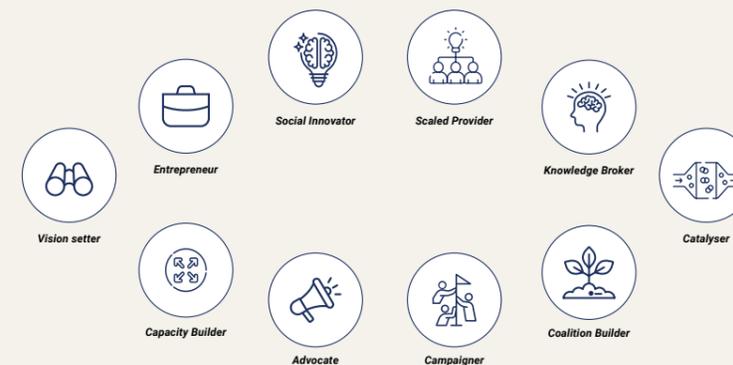
### Pathways to impact at scale

Available pathways to work towards impact at scale<sup>2</sup>

### Design principles for impact at scale

Key considerations for defining an impact at scale goal or strategy

- |                                    |  |  |                               |  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Define the problem being addressed | Clearly articulate the change you seek | Centre on the voice and agency of lived experience | Consider people and place     | Learn from and be led by First Nations' perspectives |
| Draw on the available evidence     | Seek equity at scale                   | Focus on the best interests of beneficiaries       | Consider generational impacts | Be comfortable with failing forward                  |



### Roles for impact at scale

Roles required to work towards an impact at scale goal or strategy

1,2

Social Finance, Changing lives, changing systems: building routes to scale, 2021.

# 02.

## Introduction and aims for this work

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) works with partners to drive lasting change across the community. We seek to influence systems to deliver better social outcomes for people. We do this by learning about what works in communities, helping organisations be more effective in their social impact, sharing our perspectives and advocating for change.

We want to use our skills, knowledge and expertise to solve the biggest social challenges facing Australia.

During our 20-year history, we've seen many social innovations make a real difference to people's lives. Readers working in social impact will also know of social purpose leaders and organisations leading concerted efforts to transform the lives of people and communities across the country.

Nevertheless, disadvantage remains deeply entrenched in Australia. Too many people and communities continue to find it hard to see and pursue a more positive future because of the challenges they face. Given this context, in early 2023 SVA kicked off a new program of work to better understand how Australian social purpose leaders and organisations can help drive impact at scale. Through this work, we seek to contribute to the thinking, discussion and collective efforts taking place across the country to help social sector leaders and organisations to work towards impact at scale both individually and in partnership.



### 2.1. About this paper

This paper explores the topic of impact at scale within the Australian social sector.

It sets out key features of impact at scale, with Australian case studies highlighting the different approaches in working towards this goal. Our aim is that the paper will bring together a uniquely Australian set of perspectives on the topic, which is broadly missing in current literature.

In developing this paper, we spoke with sector leaders from across the country to understand the different experiences and pathways being adopted when working towards impact at scale. We surveyed over 300 people working across the social sector to better understand their views on how impact at scale is important to their work and the enablers and barriers they faced in their efforts.

We also convened over 100 leaders from across the public, private, philanthropic and non-government sectors to test and share our emerging insights and perspectives on impact at scale. In this forum, we were challenged to think more laterally about the topic and reflect further on the voice of lived experience from across the community, and to learn from and be led by First Nations' perspectives.

The paper explores four areas to support social purpose leaders and organisations better understand and plan their efforts to drive lasting change across Australia.



The perspectives shared across these four areas draws on the views shared with us throughout the project and builds on existing literature. This includes the work of [System Innovation Initiative leaders](#) Charles Leadbeater and Jennie Winhall, and impact finance and advisory nonprofit [Social Finance](#), which have shaped our thinking on the available pathways and roles to creating impact at scale.

We recognise that, for each of the areas covered, this work is one contribution and more thinking will be required to progress collective efforts for creating impact at scale.<sup>3</sup>

3 See C Leadbeater and J Winhall, The Rockwool Foundation, Building Better Systems: A Green paper on System Innovation, 2020, accessed 27 November 2023; Social Finance, Changing Lives, Changing Systems: Building Routes to Scale, 2021, accessed 27 November 2023.

## 2.2. Other project resources

Our project has involved several modules of work, including a review of international and national literature.

In addition to this paper, we have developed three key resources to help social purpose leaders and organisations consider how they can work effectively towards impact at scale:

### 01. Impact at scale sector survey summary:

Headline results and findings from our sector survey.

*Use case: The summary will help readers understand various perspectives on impact at scale including key challenges and opportunities faced across the social sector.*

### 02. Social change framework summaries:

An outline of key social change and impact at scale frameworks, including brief summaries and references.

*Use case: These frameworks will help readers understand different approaches and ways of thinking about social change.*

### 03. Detailed case studies:

Selected case studies of impact at scale efforts taking place across Australia.

*Use case: The detailed case studies will help readers understand the different pathways that social purpose leaders and organisations have adopted to drive towards impact at scale.*

Find it here



## 2.3. Future directions for our work

The publication of this paper is not the end of our journey to better understand how to drive impact at scale in Australia.

We know there are several critical topics to help plan, implement and measure efforts towards impact at scale. As a result, we intend to expand on the various perspectives and insights included in this work into the future. We encourage readers who are interested to reach out to discuss what this might encompass and how to get involved.

# 03.

## What is impact at scale?

Impact at scale is a broad and expansive concept.

It is often used to describe the societal change enabled through the scaling of social and system innovations, and the changing of systems. Indeed, our conversations with social purpose leaders explored the wide parameters of the term, including its direction of travel and the depth and breadth of change being pursued.



### 3.1 Impact at scale definition

Our work adopts Social Finance's definition of impact at scale, namely:

“...the lasting change in people's lives and society we see when products, services or practices sustainably expand their reach, when systems embed change or when society and culture shift their perspective.<sup>4</sup>”

Our conversations with social purpose leaders revealed alignment with this definition because it broadly encompasses different versions of 'success' when working towards impact at scale and includes an appropriate focus on sustained change.

This definition represents the intended goal to help social purpose leaders and organisations frame their aspirations as they work towards lasting change across the community. In applying this definition, we believe it is important to consider the design principles outlined later in this paper, in particular the need to centre on the voice and agency of those with lived experience.

A notable Australian example of a collective of system actors working together to create impact at scale is the campaigning for, establishment of and ongoing improvement of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (see case study to the right).



There are many social purpose leaders and organisations working with people and communities who are not focused on impact at scale. And impact at scale is not the aspiration for all social purpose leaders. There are many social innovations which can or should not be adapted towards impact at scale. However, this paper focuses on how social purpose leaders working towards this goal can be better supported in doing so.



### Case study:

## Introducing the National Disability Insurance Scheme

The establishment of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is an example of how a collaborative approach, featuring people with lived experience and their families, campaigners, advocates, researchers and the government, can work towards achieving impact at scale. In this case, the goal was (and continues to be) supporting better outcomes for people living with disability in Australia and giving them greater control and choice over the support and services they receive.

The NDIS involved an overhaul to the previous disability support system, which was characterised by inequitable access and support that varied state by state. Today there is a more consistent approach to disability services and support across Australia and, crucially, choice and control has shifted into the hands of people living with disability. The NDIS also incorporated a new regulatory framework to govern, provide and assess quality services.

As with many efforts towards impact at scale, the NDIS requires ongoing growth and

improvement. This is particularly important considering the 2023 Royal Commission into Disability heard that despite some people with disability experiencing positive changes to their quality of life due to the NDIS, there continue to be challenges impacting the lives and wellbeing of people living with disability.

As such, the NDIS represents an evolving systemic change within the disability sector with the ongoing aim of creating better impact at scale for people living with disability.

### 3.2 Impact at scale in Australia

The Australian social sector is made up of a unique and diverse set of systems and actors. Readers will recognise that one of its striking features is that there is no one singular sector, but rather many sectors each with their own systems, ecosystems and cultures.

You will also recognise that within each of these sub-sectors there are existing service systems and infrastructures, often with government playing key and prominent roles, including as system steward, regulator, funder or service provider.

In light of the above, the focus of this paper is directed to the work being led by social purpose leaders and organisations as they strive for impact at scale within their sub-sector. And as illustrated by the case studies in this paper, in the Australian context this work is often characterised by deep engagement and connection with service systems, including the roles played by government. This is due to the existing scale, capabilities and maturity of Australia's systems, which can be leveraged to drive and embed lasting change.

This means that as part of efforts to drive impact at scale, social purpose leaders and organisations should consider how they can effectively leverage, and work with and across, our existing service systems. This includes when the focus is to shift and change the system itself.

The Our Place initiative demonstrates the importance of partnering with government and some ways in which to do this effectively.



### Case study:

## Our Place's partnership with the Victorian Government

Our Place is a place-based initiative improving education, health and wellbeing outcomes for children and families, funded by the Colman Education Foundation (CEF) and other philanthropic partners.

Our Place's approach reimagines the school as an integrated community resource combining education, health and wellbeing services, whilst prioritising community needs.

Key to Our Place's success is the partnership between CEF and the Victorian Government, which has enabled Our Place to scale to 10 communities across Victoria. Our Place shares a number of ways in which to effectively partner with government when undertaking this work.

Firstly, the partnership is based on the commitment to a shared vision of change for children and families which has held steady over the years. Relationships, trust and openness underpin this collaboration, enabling partners to effectively resolve challenges as they arise. And there is a strong authorising environment maintained from leaders across CEF, Our Place, the Victorian Government and local stakeholders, enabling the adoption of the Our Place approach and unlocking the barriers within the system.

Our Place has found it critical to invest in people who would work across boundaries, as they could empathise with the competing organisational demands and requirements that affect collaboration. These 'boundary spanners' help to build a shared language and understanding which is crucial to Our Place's cross-sector approach. One potential challenge of working with government in impact at scale can be the change of personnel over time and potential loss of individual trusted relationships. The partnership aims to address this by embedding collaboration through governance structures, codifying the partnership's ways of working and investing in onboarding processes.

Importantly, the partnership translates the shared vision into shared action, focussing on tangible activity including multi-year strategic plans for each community, while acknowledging small wins which help maintain momentum and clarity of purpose.

# Impact at scale sector survey insights: Enablers and barriers to impact at scale

There are many enablers and barriers to impact at scale unique to the Australian social sector and the diversity of its structure. In our survey of 300 people from across the sector, leaders shared their assessment of these enablers and barriers.



Sector leaders have the required funding to work towards impact at scale



Sector leaders have the required resourcing (people and time) to work towards impact at scale



Sector leaders feel confident in managing the associated risks in working towards impact at scale

## Most common enablers for impact at scale

- 01 Partnerships
- 02 Presentation of an opportunity to create impact at scale
- 03 Deep knowledge and know-how
- 04 Support from the organisation's board

## Most common barriers to impact at scale

- 01 Funding
- 02 Resourcing (people and time)
- 03 Restrictive legislation or policy
- 04 Community mindsets on social issues

## Discussion questions:

### Reflections related to this section:

How do you define impact at scale?

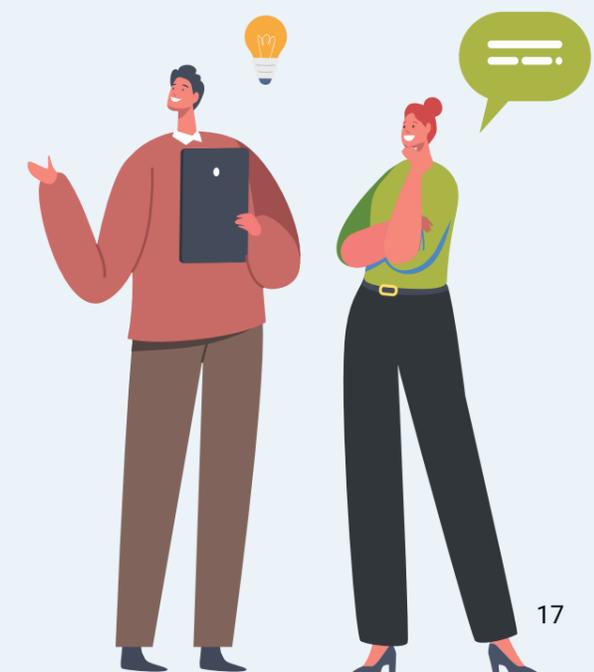
To what extent does impact at scale require 'large-scale' change?

How is the Australian social sector different to other countries? If a social innovation worked elsewhere, what might be needed for it to work here?

### Reflections for your work:

How does your work engage with, or seek to change, the existing service system?

What have been the key enablers and barriers in your work towards impact at scale?



# 04.

## Available pathways to work towards impact at scale



### 4.1 Overview

One notable topic raised in our conversations with social purpose leaders was the challenge of understanding and defining the available approaches to working towards impact at scale.

To explore this issue, leaders shared their experiences of working towards this goal. Some provided examples of scaling product innovations to enhance service quality and access, while others shared examples of advocating for changes to government funding to better support vulnerable communities. And they shared experiences working to drive change in public mindsets around social issues.

A model we found particularly useful was the Routes to Scale framework, developed by Social Finance and first published in 2021.<sup>6</sup> This framework sets out pathways that social purpose leaders and organisations can pursue to help achieve impact at scale. It defines a clear set of goals, key strategic levers and approaches to achieving these goals, and foundational elements that were found to be core to these efforts.

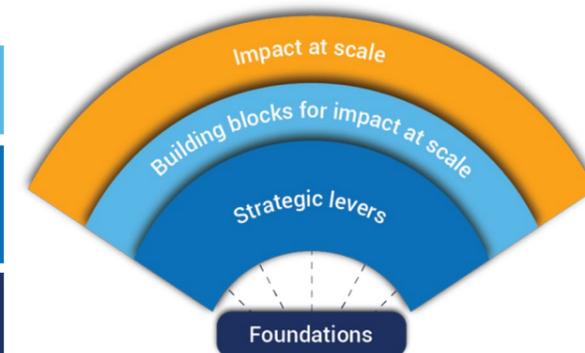
Alongside our conversations with social purpose leaders, we reviewed national and international models on social change and impact at scale models, including how these models defined the different pathways to driving and embedding social change.<sup>5</sup>

The Routes to Scale framework represents a practical and useful tool that helps to identify and organise available pathways that social purpose leaders and organisations can adopt as they work towards impact at scale. We believe it can be used by social purpose leaders and organisations in Australia to inform their own planning and work.<sup>7</sup>

### 4.2 The Routes to Scale framework<sup>8</sup>

The Routes to Scale framework is organised in three layers:

-  **Building blocks:** the tangible and significant outcomes that need to be achieved to build towards impact at scale.
-  **Strategic levers:** some of the different ways to achieve these outcomes, with different levers, and combinations of levers, being used in different approaches.
-  **Foundations:** the core elements which form the basis for efforts towards impact at scale.



<sup>5</sup> A summary of the key frameworks reviewed can be found in Social change framework summaries.  
<sup>6</sup> You can access the full framework at Social Finance, Changing lives, changing systems: building routes to scale.  
<sup>7</sup> This use case was tested with the Social Finance team, who supported the use and application of the framework across several jurisdictions.  
<sup>8</sup> This section is included with permission from Social Finance as the authors of the Routes to Scale framework. We are grateful for their ongoing support and thought leadership in this work.

## Unpacking the building blocks

The **building blocks** are the tangible and significant outcomes that need to be achieved to build towards impact at scale. They represent meaningful achievements that can be used by social purpose leaders and organisations to track and measure progress.

There are six building blocks identified in the Routes to Scale framework across three outcome areas:



Many individuals, organisations and collectives can contribute to putting the building blocks in place, with some social issues likely to benefit from having multiple actors driving towards a shared vision and goal. Building blocks do not come in a given order and often reinforce one another. Further, it is not always necessary to achieve all six of them to reach an impact at scale goal.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence's Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) is an example of how a social purpose organisation was able to work towards impact at scale through the widespread delivery of effective early education and support for children and young people.



## Case study:

# The Brotherhood of St Laurence's scaling of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters

The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) piloted the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) program in 1998 with three employed tutors supporting 20 families within their homes.

BSL gradually expanded the program to nine disadvantaged communities, developing a considerable body of practice knowledge, evaluations and evidence of its positive impact. With this evidence base, BSL was able to seek government funding for their licencing of HIPPY to not for profit organisations across Australia. This model enables greater coordination of locally based providers and

program delivery that is culturally appropriate and responsive to community needs. It also enhances opportunities for innovative service delivery resulting from economies of scale.

HIPPY now reaches over 100 communities across Australia, supporting parents and carers to be the first and continuous educators of their children.

## Unpacking the strategic levers

**Strategic levers** are the different ways to achieve the outcomes for impact at scale. Specifically, they represent different approaches and activities that social purpose leaders and organisations can pursue to put the building blocks in place. Different combinations of strategic levers are likely to be used to work towards impact at scale goals, including when scaling a new service innovation, building a social movement to change perceptions around an issue or working to implement structural enablers within a system.

Strategic levers can sit across organisational boundaries and progress can often be accelerated when organisations collaborate to identify the levers that are most relevant to their desired change and work together to influence them. As noted above, it will be important for social purpose leaders to consider how the levers adopted can help to engage with and adapt the existing service systems.

There are a broad range of strategic levers identified in the framework alongside various approaches to deploy each lever:

Strategic lever	Approaches
Create supply and demand	Making the business case; Fostering supply; Fostering demand; Addressing structural barriers
Unlock capital	Unlocking public capital; Private, long-term investment
Design for mass reach	Designing a simple solution; 'Plug and play'
Expand the organisation	Organic expansion; Mergers & acquisitions
Use new vehicles	Franchising; Licensing; Joint ventures; Mergers, acquisitions & transfers
Adapt business model for scale	Technological innovation; Streamlining or unbundling; Cross subsidy models
Develop talent	Bring new talent into a sector; Train existing decision makers or shape future leaders
Harness collective effort	Collective action models or movements; Peer-to-peer networks & communities of practice
Build the evidence base	Make an argument for change; Create a tipping point for change; Share evidence for scaled take-up
Use data for transparency and insight	Transparency that demands accountability across a system; Shine a light on the real issue
Alter or reallocate funding	Demonstrate alternative uses with better outcomes; Alter how funding is allocated
Establish new institutions	New post or role; Establishing a new body or institution
Improve regulation and standards	New performance standards or models; Embed new principles not existing structures
Create feedback loops	New funding approaches; Data transparency; Targets
Mobilise a shared voice	Bring multiple voices behind a single message for change
Attract media spotlight	Proactively work through existing channels to change the public conversation; Explicitly using media and entertainment to transform the public conversation
Challenge the status quo	Advocacy, campaigning and movement building; Lobbying, influencing and litigation; Constructive policy engagement

There is no limit on the number of strategic levers that can or should be adopted to work towards the building blocks. This reflects the potential for innovation and evolution in efforts towards impact at scale. The establishment of the Australian Early Development Census demonstrates the use of several strategic levers, including designing for mass reach, harnessing collective effort and using data for transparency and insight on childhood development.



## Case study:

# The Australian Early Development Census as a system enabler for childhood development

In 2004, the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) and the Telethon Kids Institute clearly articulated the need for a population level measure of early childhood development that would enable better policy and support across the early years sector at a local, state and national level.

This led to the development and national implementation of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).

CCCH's vision for impact at scale was anchored in the belief that better data was required to support decision makers, especially those at the local level, in improving early childhood development. The AEDC was conceived as a new system enabler to measure and share data on developmental outcomes for children across the nation. In developing the early version of the AEDC

there was an explicit focus on developing a successful solution for national scale, piloting the measurement tool across 60 diverse communities to understand how it could be most effectively deployed in different contexts.

The AEDC is now a national data collection tool which has collected critical data from over 1.5 million children every three years since 2009.

## Unpacking the foundations

Lastly, Social Finance outlines three **foundations** that this work is built on. These elements were found to be core to many efforts towards impact at scale.

The three foundations include:

<b>Strong partnership</b>	The need to leverage collective efforts and partnerships across different sectors and actors.
<b>Consistent funding</b>	The need for longer-term funding to support the focus, momentum and vision of impact at scale.
<b>Clear story</b>	The need to explain what is wrong with the status quo and the vision for change to unite and mobilise others.

Together, these foundations provide the essential support that enables long-term change.



## Discussion questions:

Reflections related to this section:

How do you define the building blocks of impact at scale?

What foundations are core to these efforts?

Reflections for your work:

Reflecting on your own work towards impact at scale, which building blocks are you focused on?

What combination of strategic levers have you found most effective in this work?

How have you seen the foundations enable your efforts towards impact at scale?

## 05.

# Key considerations for defining an impact at scale goal or strategy



## 5.1 Overview

Our conversations with social purpose leaders highlighted a number of considerations which were seen to be important across many impact at scale efforts.

Many highlighted the need for work to be anchored in the voice and agency of lived experience. The importance of designing and planning for equity at scale was also recognised as essential, alongside learning from and sharing failures to accelerate collective efforts towards impact at scale.

We have sought to capture these considerations as a set of design principles to inform the development of impact at scale strategies. The principles are broadly applicable to any aspiration for, and pathway towards, impact at scale. Our hope is they provide useful provocations for social purpose leaders and organisations working towards impact at scale, supporting improved and more effective efforts.

## 5.2 Design principles for impact at scale

We have articulated ten design principles for impact at scale. While this is not an exhaustive list, our conversations with social purpose leaders have highlighted the following as critical features and techniques that can be used when planning and working towards impact at scale.

Define the problem being addressed

Clearly articulate the change you seek

Centre on the voice and agency of lived experience

Consider people and place

Learn from and be led by First Nations' perspectives

Draw on the available evidence

Seek equity at scale

Focus on the best interests of beneficiaries

Consider generational impacts

Be comfortable with failing forward

## Define the problem being addressed

Working towards impact at scale requires deep knowledge of the issue being addressed. And social purpose leaders with the same general focus may have differing opinions on the particular problem they are addressing. Some may be focused on the ineffectiveness of services for beneficiaries, while others may be tackling negative community mindsets towards the issues impacting those beneficiaries.

Defining the problem can help social purpose leaders to define its underlying drivers and root causes, and therefore the opportunities to shift these factors. Often, social purpose leaders will see there are different drivers holding an issue in place and will recognise it is not always possible for one organisation to address all of them. This reinforces the powerful enabler of collaboration and partnerships in working to address social problems.

## Clearly articulate the change you seek

Articulating what success looks like is a key step to understanding the pathways and roles that may be required. Social purpose leaders should consider the specific outcomes being sought from their efforts, who these outcomes are for, the scale of these outcomes (how deep or how broad), and what activities will lead to these outcomes. A scaling strategy or theory of change can be a helpful tool in articulating these aspirations.<sup>9</sup>

Defining the impact at scale goal also involves an appreciation of the potential timescale of change. For some goals, the outcomes being sought may be achieved in a shorter time frame. However, working to shift entrenched disadvantage often involves ongoing and longer-term efforts.<sup>10</sup>



<sup>9</sup> See J Gargani and R McLean, 'Scaling science', Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2017.  
<sup>10</sup> Research has identified that most social initiatives take over 25 years to reach their scaling goal. See Susan W Ditkoff and A Grindle, 'Audacious philanthropy: lessons from 15 world-changing initiatives', Harvard Business Review, 2017.

## Centre on the voice and agency of lived experience

Our engagement with social purpose leaders emphasised the importance of centring efforts on the voice of lived experience. This prioritises the needs, agency and self-determination of the beneficiaries supported.

When defining the aspiration of impact at scale, those with lived experience can support in articulating 'what good looks like'. This is important as people and communities may differ in their views on priority outcomes and may identify outcomes which may not be apparent to others.

Furthermore, those with lived experience will often have greater insight into what may or may not work to deliver better outcomes. They can help provide the deep, contextual understanding that is needed to design effective efforts towards impact at scale and create buy-in from the communities impacted.

## Consider people and place

We consistently heard of the importance of context when working towards impact at scale. Fostering social change requires ongoing consideration of the diverse needs of different communities. An intervention that is successful for one group or region may not be for another.<sup>11</sup> It is therefore important for social purpose leaders to consider factors including geography, demographics, mindsets and lived experiences of the communities that will be affected by the intervention.

For example, social purpose leaders may see that the experiences and challenges of regional and remote communities vary to those in metropolitan areas. Indeed, disadvantage is often locational; concentrated in particular regions and persisting over long periods of time.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, supporting diverse cohorts of a community may require adaptation relevant to different cultural histories, languages, beliefs and world views.



<sup>11</sup> See J Gargani and R McLean, Scaling impact: innovation for the public good, Routledge, 2019.  
<sup>12</sup> R Tanton, L Dare, R Miranti, Y Vidyattama, A Yule and M McCabe, Dropping off the edge 2021: Persistent and multilayered disadvantage in Australia, Jesuit Social Services, 2021.

## Learn from and be led by First Nations' perspectives

In line with the principle of centring the voice of lived experience, achieving impact at scale in Australia demands a prioritisation of the diversity, agency and self-determination of First Nations peoples. Such an approach is integral to ensuring that efforts are genuinely inclusive, effectively addressing the unique needs and goals of First Nations communities.

As SVA is not a First Nations organisation, we rely on the insights shared by First Nations leaders and organisations to guide our understanding of meaningful impact at scale. The following perspectives, while not exhaustive, offer valuable insights from these leaders and organisations. They provide guidance on how non-Indigenous social purpose leaders can engage with First Nations peoples, incorporating their views and leadership in efforts to achieve impact at scale.

In efforts to achieve impact at scale within First Nations communities, leadership and guidance from these communities are essential from the outset. This includes partnering with First Nations communities to establish their leading roles in defining problems, setting goals, and developing and evaluating solutions. Such an approach ensures that large-scale initiatives are deeply rooted in the unique voices, knowledge and histories of First Nations peoples, which is essential for impactful and respectful outcomes.

Recognising that the challenges faced by First Nations peoples often stem from systemic and generational factors, efforts towards impact at scale must address broader institutional contexts, rather than solely focussing on changing community behaviours. This includes social purpose leaders and organisations acknowledging the systemic and generational trauma that many First Nations communities experience and an appreciation of how this trauma may influence efforts.

The nature and metrics of impact at scale as envisioned by First Nations communities can diverge from conventional frameworks. It's therefore crucial to align impact at scale goals with the unique needs and interests of these communities. Indeed, impact at scale in the context of First Nations peoples is often rooted in community-based approaches, emphasising local perspectives, needs and cultural nuances.

Outside of direct efforts affecting First Nations communities, we believe social purpose leaders and organisations have an opportunity to learn from the perspectives of First Nations peoples across all impact at scale efforts. The wealth of knowledge our First Nations peoples hold can be applied to creating better social outcomes for all communities. This includes considering intergenerational effects and how efforts supporting communities today will have flow on effects for future generations.

One way that SVA itself has demonstrated its commitment to learning from and being led by First Nations perspectives is through our First Nations Practice Principles (see below). Our First Nations Practice Principles provide us with guidance on how to respectfully engage with First Nations communities and organisations, ensuring a high standard of practice across the work we do.<sup>13</sup> We note this is an ongoing journey for us as a non-First Nations organisation, and we acknowledge there will always be more work for us to do.

SVA's First Nations Practice Principles



## Draw on the available evidence

Efforts towards impact at scale will be more effective when they draw on available evidence. This should include evidence on what works best, for whom, and in what circumstances. Ensuring that people and communities are scaffolded with relevant frameworks, methods, data and evidence helps avoid wasted effort in 'reinventing the wheel'. Evidence will typically consider real life examples and help define the pre-conditions for social change as well as the

mechanisms of why and how an approach will help drive impact at scale. These insights are important for social purpose leaders and organisations as they inform understandings about what makes an approach likely to work in different contexts and communities.

## Seek equity at scale

Social purpose leaders frequently raised the need to work towards impact at scale that provides equal opportunities and outcomes to all beneficiaries. This requires efforts to be tailored in how they support or reach different cohorts. This can pose a challenge given the diversity of people and places across Australia.

Designing for equity at scale becomes particularly important when considering large-scale service provision or interventions. It is often in larger interventions where the most disadvantaged can be forgotten or excluded from access. The example of Goodstart Early Learning outlines how equity at scale can be embedded into an impact at scale ambition.



## Case study:

# Goodstart Early Learning embedding inclusion as a strategic goal

Goodstart is the largest provider of early childhood education and care in Australia with over 660 centres operating across a diverse mix of **regional** and urban communities.

Equity of outcomes and inclusion is embedded within Goodstart's impact at scale ambition of providing accessible, quality and inclusive early learning and care across Australia. Despite its broad reach, Goodstart has embedded inclusion as a foundational strategic goal which has been a critical step to supporting children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

As a result, one third of children attending Goodstart centres have an identified vulnerability, and Goodstart outperforms the sector in servicing children who identify as First Nations, live with a disability or are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Goodstart then draws on this experience and its unique position in the sector to create evidence of what works at scale, and has successfully advocated for policy change to improve outcomes for all of Australia's children.

## Focus on the best interests of beneficiaries

For many social purpose organisations, scale or growth can be of interest for organisational reasons. It can provide genuine benefits like economies of scale, increased brand awareness and the ability to attribute the scale of impact to potential funders. However, impact at scale requires a focus on 'scaling of impact' as opposed to 'scaling the organisation'. These are not always equivalent.

Unlike organisations in the for-profit sector, social purpose leaders have a moral duty to prioritise social impact over organisational returns. This may result in an assessment that impact at scale can be better achieved through avenues other than growing the organisation, including partnerships, supporting the capabilities of other organisations, or open-source knowledge sharing.

## Consider generational impacts

Many social purpose leaders, particularly First Nations leaders, highlighted the importance of prioritising intergenerational impact to create lasting outcomes for communities. Deep impact can create better social outcomes not only for beneficiaries directly served by efforts, but for future generations. This can sometimes positively affect a person's children, their wider families, and the future community.

As such, there is a need for social purpose leaders to consider both the potential positive and negative consequences for future generations caused by their work. We note there are challenges associated with measuring intergenerational impact; it can require consistent, longitudinal data, which can be difficult to capture or beyond the funding scope of a program.

## Be comfortable with failing forward

Social change is not linear, and often requires behaviour and mindset changes. Impact at scale will always be an ongoing process, requiring adaptation, flexibility and working in new and different ways to achieve the work's aspiration. The journey is one of continuous, incremental learning and improvement. Social purpose leaders highlighted the importance of being willing to 'fail', reflect and learn, and change course along this journey.

Given this context, 'failure', or the inability to achieve the intended change, can be viewed as an opportunity to draw out key learnings and openly share these learnings with others to avoid the same pitfalls. Creating a culture of failing forward and continually learning can be a powerful enabler across sectors.

## Discussion questions:

### Reflections related to this section:

What other principles should social purpose leaders consider when articulating and designing impact at scale efforts?

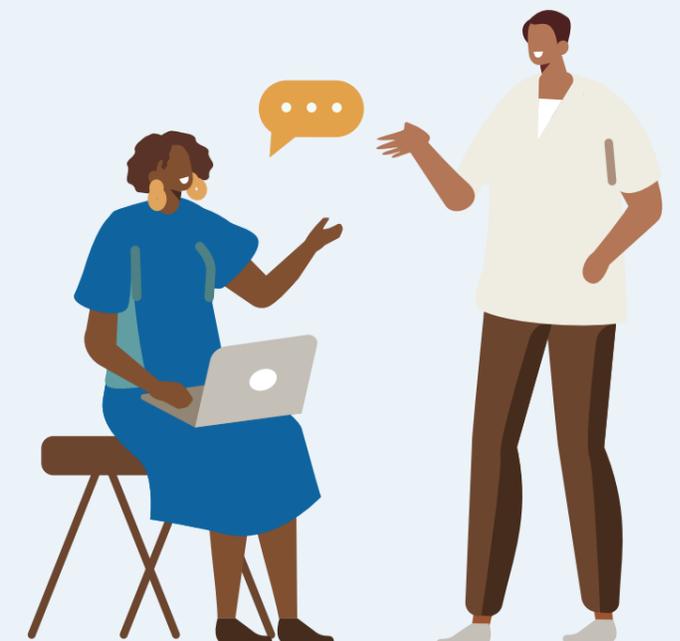
### Reflections for your work:

How do you consider the unintended consequences of your efforts towards impact at scale?

How do you consider the breadth or depth of your efforts?

How are you learning from and being led by First Nations' perspectives?

How have you experienced failing forward in your work?



06.

## The potential roles required to work towards an impact at scale goal or strategy



### 6.1. Overview

Our conversations with social purpose leaders consistently highlighted that impact at scale is beyond the scope of any single organisation or individual. It requires genuine collaboration across a range of actors with differing capabilities and focus, working together towards a shared goal and aspiration. This diversity of expertise is important as it helps identify the different leverage points that shift an underlying social problem.

In reviewing Australian examples of impact at scale alongside our conversations with leaders, we identified distinct roles that are, and can be, adopted when undertaking this work. These roles provide the overarching priorities and mindsets that support different aspirations of impact at scale. Alongside the design principles and Routes to Scale pathways we've discussed, these roles provide guidance to social purpose leaders to help plan their efforts.

We have identified 10 overarching roles that are needed to work towards impact at scale.<sup>14</sup> In most sectors, all or several of these roles will be required, and the roles needed may change over time as the context changes. In many cases various actors will be required to play the same role. This multiplicity often ensures that the breadth of levers is applied and a collective of actors with diverse mindsets and skills are collaborating to achieve the common goal.

Moreover, the boundaries between these roles can be blurred, as they are deeply interconnected and will be played by a myriad of actors, with some stepping in and out of roles as the context requires. Collectively, the roles complement each other, compounding and accelerating efforts to drive impact at scale. And collaboration and partnership between different actors playing different roles will often be a key enabler of change.

Many of these roles will focus on changes to the overarching system, reimagining what a new and better system could look like. Others may focus on changes and improvements within the system. This also means many of these roles will need to focus on the more implicit aspects of the system, including power dynamics, relationships and underlying mindsets.

By articulating these roles, our aim is to develop a shared vocabulary around the different efforts required to create impact at scale. We encourage readers to map their efforts and the efforts of others within their sector, and consider whether key roles are missing which may better support collective efforts to drive positive change.



These roles are not articulated with funders and government in mind, though each role will require the appropriate resourcing in order to undertake their efforts. Our aspiration in future pieces of work is to further explore the more specific roles of funders and government in impact at scale efforts.

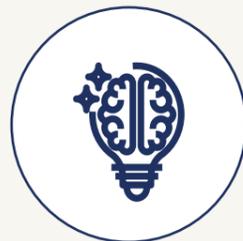
## 6.2. Key roles



**Vision Setter**



**Entrepreneur**



**Social Innovator**



**Scaled Provider**



**Knowledge Broker**



**Advocate**



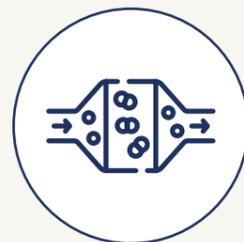
**Campaigner**



**Coalition Builder**



**Capacity Builder**



**Catalyser**



**Vision Setters** have a deep understanding of an overarching social issue, and its challenges and opportunities, which they use to paint the picture of a better future. Vision Setters develop the overarching goal for impact at scale and seek buy-in from sector actors on the vision of a more positive future. They can be individuals who strive to build a better world, setting the direction regardless of whether the pathway is immediately clear. Vision Setters may often be undertaking another role to deploy the change required to shift the social issue.



**Entrepreneurs** seek to transform the system. They develop new system innovations, vehicles and frameworks to change the overarching structure. Entrepreneurs are disruptive, sometimes restructuring the system to better enable impact at scale by others. They are similar to Social Innovators in their strong innovative capabilities, however, their focus is on the broader system structures that hold a social issue in place.



**Social Innovators** design, develop and test new products, services or practices within a sector to create change. They have deep knowledge of underlying social issues and design improvements to existing supports and ways of working to create better outcomes. Social Innovators undertake social research and development, and co-design with beneficiaries to develop effective solutions. They will build an evidence base, pinpointing the contextual factors that influence the innovation's effectiveness.



**Scaled Providers** either identify and scale 'what works' or leverage their existing market share to deploy products or services at scale. They pursue impact at scale by focussing on improving the quality, accessibility and equity of service provision at scale. Social Innovators may transition into Scaled Providers as they expand their innovations' reach, often using a range of different vehicles or business models.





**Knowledge Brokers** are the researchers, experts and think tanks within a sector. They pursue impact at scale by developing, sharing and translating research and evidence to improve practices, mindsets or public policy. Knowledge Brokers will often play a key role across many pathways towards impact at scale. This includes building the evidence base for new services or ways of working, making the case for more supportive policies and translating key findings to shift community perspectives on social issues. Credibility and trust are often key characteristics of effective Knowledge Brokers.



**Advocates** serve as a strong voice on behalf of other sector actors. They support impact at scale by representing others' needs and interests, typically to change practices, policies or systems. Advocates can take many forms. They may represent service delivery organisations, advocating for change within the sector to allow their members to create better social impact. Or they may represent those with lived experience, advocating for improved awareness of, and solutions to, social issues.



**Campaigners** harness the power of the collective to champion social change. By coordinating social movements and campaigns, Campaigners shift community mindsets and policies to enable impact at scale. They can leverage many different tools to inform and activate the public, including research and evidence, effective storytelling and the arts. Effective Campaigners keep lived experience at the centre, through narratives that hold the public's attention, while making complex social issues accessible with clear explanations for why change is needed.



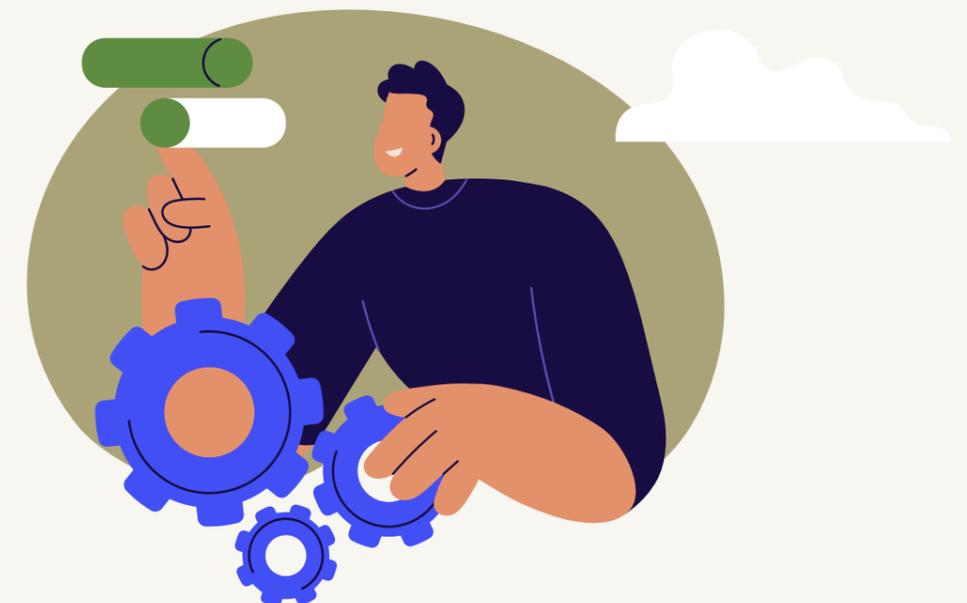
**Coalition Builders** act as the glue between other roles, convening and brokering partnerships. They facilitate and encourage meaningful collaboration towards impact at scale, often between similar or complementary roles. This requires a high level of trust and credibility, as Coalition Builders can bring together unlikely partners to more effectively work together. Coalition Builders often create new networks and unite communities towards achieving a shared goal of impact at scale.



**Capacity Builders** create opportunities for other sector actors to better deliver impact and develop their skills, capabilities and effectiveness. Capacity Builders often identify leaders within a sector, whether individuals or organisations, and focus on building their capabilities to amplify their impact. They may also develop the capabilities of local communities, supporting their self-determination and agency.



**Catalysers** are those who influence and amplify the efforts of others, often working behind the scenes. They are the sector optimisers, identifying and filling gaps within a sector by improving broader enablers and facilitating the work of others to drive improved outcomes. They focus on how to enable others to create better impact.



# Discussion questions:

## Reflections related to this section:

How do these roles resonate with your experience of working towards impact at scale? Are there other key roles required for this work?

What are the roles of funders and commissioning bodies in enabling this work?

## Reflections for your work:

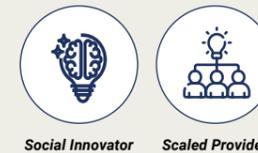
What role(s) are you currently adopting in your work?

What role(s) may be missing within your sector, which could help accelerate efforts towards impact at scale?



Below are brief examples of Australian social purpose organisations working towards impact at scale and the various roles they've adopted to do so. More detailed case studies can be found in the supplementary document to this paper.

### Berry Street and the Berry Street Educational Model (BSEM)



BSEM is an evidence-led approach to teaching and learning that supports educators to improve outcomes for all students, particularly those with complex and unmet learning needs.

Berry Street drew on its 140-year history supporting vulnerable children alongside over 10 years of longitudinal research exploring trauma-informed, strengths-based teaching practices emerging from the Berry Street School with emphasis on increasing self-regulatory and relational capacities required for engagement with learning.

To date, BSEM has been able to expand its reach to over 70,000 Australian educators representing over 1,600 schools within government, faith-based and independent sectors. BSEM did this by remaining focused on quality delivery and implementation strategies throughout education systems to propel demand.

### Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) and the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

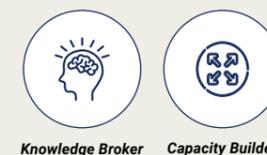


CCCH, in partnership with the Telethon Kids Institute, worked to develop, pilot and influence government adoption of the AEDC – a regular, national data collection on early childhood development enabling better policy and service planning.

CCCH drew on its research and design expertise to adapt the Canadian Early Developmental Index to the Australian context. It then leveraged its position as a trusted partner to government, alongside supporting influencers at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the Australian Government and the Council of Australian Governments, to advocate for the nation-wide uptake of the AEDC.

Since its national launch in 2009, it has collected critical developmental data from over 1.5 million children.

### Evidence for Learning (E4L)

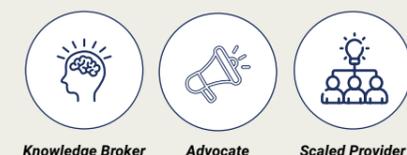


E4L is an initiative within SVA that builds and shares evidence of the most reputable research to support Australian educators to improve teaching practices and deliver improved learning outcomes.

E4L's independence from government, researchers and education program developers, alongside its focus on quality and tailored evidence to the Australian context, provides the credibility required to expand its reach. Further, E4L invests substantial resources in building the capabilities of schools, early learning settings and educators to effectively put the evidence and research into practice.

E4L has 26,000 frequent users of its materials across the nation, improving the quality, availability and use of evidence in education. Since its inception in 2015, there have been over 850,000 visits to, and over 150,000 downloads from, the E4L website.

### Goodstart Early Learning

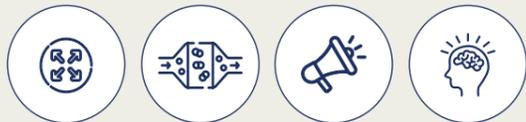


Goodstart is Australia's largest provider of early learning and care with over 660 centres providing services to more than 10 million children. Goodstart was founded on a vision of giving children the best possible start in life through access to quality early learning.

Through its scale, Goodstart has been able to increase the quality and capability of its centres, embedding inclusion as a key strategic goal.

Goodstart's commitment to service excellence at scale provides it with the credibility and voice to act as an advocate for the sector, demonstrating to policy makers what is possible and advocating for change. The scale of its network enables Goodstart to commission and collaborate in research and evaluation that increases the sector's overall knowledge about how best to support children's learning and development.

### Health Justice Australia (HJA)



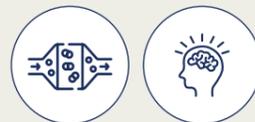
Capacity Builder Catalyser Advocate Knowledge Broker

HJA is the national centre of excellence for health justice partnerships – a practitioner-led movement that is transforming the way health, legal and other services help people with complex, intersecting needs. HJA maintains a focus on the authorising environment through which health and justice services are funded and regulated, working to transform these systems to enable impact at scale.

It catalyses the impact of cross sector collaborations between practitioners by building the evidence base, undertaking advocacy and policy change, and enabling partnering and learning across services. HJA's independence and its focus on evidence has enabled it to advocate and influence government funding, design and delivery at the federal and state level.

In 2023, there were over 110 health justice partnerships across Australia.

### Our Place



Catalyser Knowledge Broker

Our Place is a place-based initiative improving education, health and wellbeing outcomes for children and families across 10 Victorian communities. Our Place's approach reimagines the school as an integrated community resource combining education, health and wellbeing services, whilst prioritising community needs.

Our Place works in partnership with government and the local system of providers to ensure coordinated and accessible support for children and families. By widely documenting and sharing the learnings from its locations, Our Place has built a sizable evidence base to provide changemakers with a guide to how this novel way of working in place can significantly improve community outcomes.

### Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) and Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)



Scaled Provider Knowledge Broker

The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) has an exclusive licence to run the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) in Australia; a free, home-based early learning and parenting program supporting early-childhood learning in the home.

HIPPY was developed in 1969 in Israel, with BSL piloting the program under licence in Australia in 1998. BSL gradually expanded the program to nine disadvantaged communities, developing a considerable body of practice knowledge and evidence that demonstrated its positive impact. With this evidence base, BSL was able to seek government funding for its licensing of HIPPY nationally across urban, regional and remote communities.

HIPPY now reaches over 100 communities across Australia, supporting parents and carers to be the first, and continuous, educators of their children.

### Synergis Fund



Entrepreneur

SVA, in partnership with Federation Asset Management, created Synergis Fund to unlock new sources of capital that weren't being accessed before to create much-needed disability housing.

Synergis Fund brought together specialist disability accommodation housing developers, supported independent living providers, and an advisory committee that includes people with disability. The fund's mission is to prove the viability of specialist disability accommodation as a scalable asset class for investment. Synergis Fund invests in safe and appropriate housing that gives people with disability independence, privacy and choice and control over their living environment.

As of late 2023, Synergis Fund has already committed to 130 investments to provide homes for over 500 people with disability.

### Reconciliation Australia and Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP)



Coalition Builder Catalyser

Reconciliation Australia is the lead body for reconciliation in Australia, building relationships, respect and trust between the broader community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The RAP program was developed to enable organisations to sustainably and strategically take meaningful action to advance reconciliation.

RAPs have empowered and catalysed the efforts of organisations towards reconciliation, which in turn provides tangible and substantive benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, increasing economic equity and supporting self-determination. Reconciliation Australia has rallied this coalition of RAP members around a shared vision, through annual conferences, learning circles and building the leadership of RAP organisations that are further progressed along their reconciliation journey.

Through its credibility and active collaboration with a diverse network committed to reconciliation, the RAP network has grown to over 2,900 Australian organisations impacting 5.4 million people each day.

### SNAICC



Vision Setter Advocate

SNAICC is the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family services, ensuring children have culturally appropriate supports early in life. SNAICC draws upon the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal-led community organisations enabling it to share and embed its vision of an Australian society in which the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families are protected, communities are empowered to determine their futures and where cultural identity is valued.

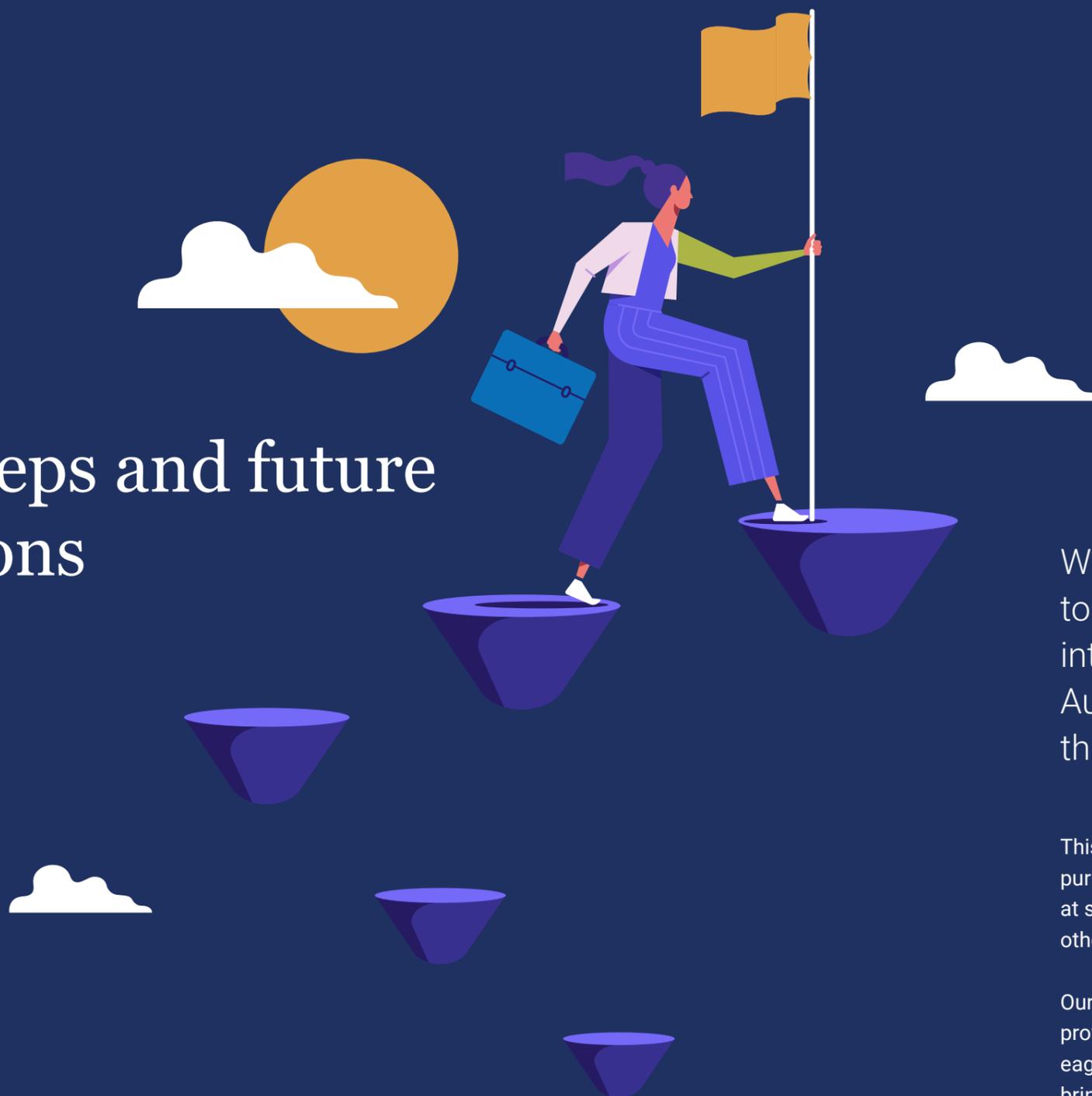
SNAICC's trusted relationships with Aboriginal-led community organisations, government and other system actors enables it to act as a strong and unified voice on the issues facing children and families. SNAICC also undertakes a broad program of work to build the capabilities of its member organisations including support with monitoring and evaluation, policy, practice and workforce development, funding and resourcing.



# 07.

## Next steps and future ambitions

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We hope this paper provides a provocation to social purpose leaders and organisations interested in working towards impact at scale in Australia and supports ongoing discussions and thinking around this topic.

This paper explored several concepts in its aim to support Australian social purpose leaders to better understand and plan their efforts towards impact at scale. Many of these topics are continuing to evolve for us, as they are for others. We hope to continue exploring these in future pieces of work.

Our invitation to readers is to use and test the concepts we have shared and provide feedback on other aspects that are important in this work. We are eager to continue engaging in conversations around this topic, as readers bring different perspectives and experiences that will help shape how we collectively work towards impact at scale.

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