

# EVIDENCE FOR ACTION IN THE EARLY YEARS SYSTEM

## Assessing System Leverage Points



Part 3 of 6:  
**CLUSTER 1**  
Communities  
and families in  
the driver's seat

Prepared by:

- Orange Compass
- Centre for Community Child Health
- Clear Horizon
- Sefa (Social Enterprise Finance Australia)





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**Clear Horizon**

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- Kirsty Arnott
- Julia Cornelius
- Karen Hagen
- Annette Harwood
- Bree Katsamangos
- Jade Leak
- Sara McAlister
- Cara Miller
- Nicole Pilsworth
- M'Lynda Stubbs
- Helen Walker

## First Nations Input

- Maurita Cavanaugh
- Joanne Goulding
- Lisa Walker
- Staff from the team at Children's Ground - Alice Springs

## Other Specialist Input

- Seanna Davidson
- Jen Lorains
- Paul Prichard

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## Project Team

- Ellise Barkley, Clear Horizon
- Zoe Enticott & team, Clear Horizon
- Rebecca Fry, Centre for Community Child Health
- Lauren Heery, Centre for Community Child Health
- Myrna Machuca-Sierra, Social Enterprise Finance Australia
- Renee Martin, Social Enterprise Finance Australia
- Fiona McKenzie, Orange Compass
- Eve Millar, Orange Compass
- Tim Moore, Centre for Community Child Health
- Sophie O'Sullivan, Social Enterprise Finance Australia
- Heidi Peterson, Clear Horizon
- Sarah Rogers, Orange Compass

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# COMMONLY USED TERMS

The reader will find these terms used throughout the Evidence for Action documents.

<b>ACTORS and KEY ACTORS</b>	<p>A 'system' actor is a person/ entity /organisation that interacts with the system and through their interaction is part of the system.</p> <p>This can be a child, a parent, a community member, a politician, an organisation or an entity like a service agency, federal/ state or local government, a peak body.</p> <p>Key actors in this report refers to those who are acting to create or drive systemic change – which are found in each case study.</p>
<b>EARLY YEARS SYSTEM</b>	<p>We are referring to a 'system' in its broadest sense - one that involves the interaction of many parts and different actors. In a structural sense, there is no clearly defined early years system in Australia, but rather many systems that influence early childhood development outcomes.</p> <p>See the Early Years Catalyst's ECD Systems Landscape Atlas for more details about the systems that influence ECD outcomes.</p>
<b>SYSTEMS MAPPING</b>	<p>In late 2021, the Early Years Catalyst undertook <a href="#">a systems mapping process</a> to identify the forces influencing early childhood development outcomes in Australia today and possible leverage points for change.</p>
<b>LEVERAGE POINTS</b>	<p>A leverage point is a place in the system where, by intervening or applying pressure, we can influence change across the whole system.</p>
<b>SYSTEMS CHANGE</b>	<p>Refers to shifting components or parts of a system and the way these components interact. Systems change may occur at varying levels of the system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Micro:</b> small scale change at the level of a single organisation or interactions between individuals</li> <li>• <b>Meso:</b> medium scale change - often community level or local level change</li> <li>• <b>Macro:</b> large scale / whole of system scale social and policy change.</li> </ul>

# INTRODUCTION

This is **Part 3** of the six-part series that make up the Early Years Catalyst's *Evidence for Action* report.

In early 2023, the Early Years Catalyst commissioned the development of an evidence-informed inventory for action, to further explore and build knowledge about the range of leverage points identified through the Early Years Catalyst's systems mapping process with a particular focus on insights for implementation.

In commissioning this project, the Early Years Catalyst sought to understand two key things:

- the relative potential of each leverage point to transform the early years system and improve early childhood development (ECD) outcomes
- the evidence for action – what does the evidence say about **what it will take to create transformative change in Australia's early years system?**

The results of the assessment and evidence gathering process have been compiled into the full *Evidence for Action* report, a substantive resource for the field that provides rich insights into the top 18 leverage points including:

- the available evidence
- potential impacts on **ECD outcomes**
- approaches to implementation, including **pre-conditions**
- case study examples of **implementation**, including lessons learnt and information regarding **costs and timelines**.

For ease of navigation the *Evidence for Action* report has been divided into six parts:

Part 1: **Key Findings:** Summary of Findings and Insights

Part 2: Leverage Point Assessment: **The Approach**

Part 3: **Cluster 1** - Communities and families in the driver's seat (Leverage Points 1-6)

Part 4: **Cluster 2** - Re-imagining the service system (Leverage Points 7-10)

Part 5: **Cluster 3** - Shared accountability for children's outcomes (Leverage Points 11-14)

Part 6: **Cluster 4** - Shifting society's perspectives (Leverage Points 15-18)

- **We recommended** that you read Part 1: Key Findings before reading Parts 3-6 (the cluster documents).
- To learn more about the assessment methodology and the approach to gathering evidence go to Part 2: The Approach.

## What you will find in this document

This document is focused on sharing the evidence gathered about the leverage points in the **Communities and families in the driver's seat** cluster, one of the four clusters of leverage points that have been grouped together by their linkage to key elements of the desired future state early years system, identified during the Early Years Catalyst's systems mapping process.

Each cluster document includes:

- A cluster summary that considers the group of leverage points 'as a whole', including the convergent evidence, the interconnections and linkages between them and their potential for transformational impact.



- Individual leverage point summaries that explore the convergent evidence for action for each leverage point and considerations for implementation
- Case studies related to each leverage point that illustrate one way that the leverage point has been implemented.

## Gathering convergent evidence for action

In keeping with the Early Years Catalyst's commitment to participatory processes and belief that a diversity of perspectives and wisdom delivers the best outcomes, *Evidence for Action* has drawn on diverse sources to for 'convergent evidence'.

Perspectives and insights have been drawn from frontline practice knowledge and expertise; family perspectives; First Nations culture, wisdom and ways of knowing and formal, published literature, from at home and around the world. These diverse perspectives are included in the evidence for each leverage point (see **Part 2: The Approach** for more detail).

Our approach to the formal literature scan and selection of case studies also reflects a diversity of perspectives. As each leverage point could be interpreted in many different ways and there are many potential examples, we emphasise that what is included here is but one interpretation and example, as a starting point for further exploration and consideration. The case studies are drawn from a broad range of contexts and scales, from within Australia and internationally, across early years and non-early years sectors, developed using various evidence sources.

We would also emphasise that the case studies selected for inclusion in the *Evidence for Action* report, have published evaluations of their impact. This decision was made to ensure a degree of consistency in evidence across all the leverage points. However, we acknowledge that this choice excluded many case studies that may also have made great illustrations of how to implement a particular leverage point (see our reflections about the evidence in **Part 1: Key Findings**).

As many of the leverage points are interconnected, the reader may notice repetition in literature and citations between the case studies. This was intentional and unavoidable, so that each leverage point and accompanying case study can be read as a stand-alone document.

Some of the case studies, while used to demonstrate one particular leverage point, also illustrate implementation of other leverage points. We encourage you to explore the linked leverage points and case studies for the fullest picture of the potential impact of the leverage point.

## What do these leverage points mean for you?

If you are reading this document, you likely have a strong interest in improving early childhood development outcomes for children and their families. All of these leverage points speak to changes in the early years system that would ultimately improve long term outcomes for children and families.

Wherever you sit in the system, whether you are front line worker, practitioner, service manager, policy maker or politician, you can influence systems change.

These case studies are one example where specific actors have or are driving change, at a specific level in the system. This is not the only way to do it. For many of these leverage points, change can be driven in different ways, by different actors (including you) through taking different approaches to implementation, at different levels of the system.



# SUMMARY: CLUSTER 1 - COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

This cluster of leverage points is focused on the potential for transformational change in the early years system through significant systemic shifts in power, by devolving decision-making to the local level and working in new ways with communities and families.

This cluster envisages communities who are empowered to partner with government and services to ensure effective responses to local needs; enabled by system structures like fit-for-purpose funding and commissioning and valuing lived experience as a key input to policy development, design and implementation.

This cluster speaks to key themes from the future desired state system mapping, including:

- Strengthening families, parents and carers
- Strengthening local communities - particularly *empowering local voices*.

# THE LEVERAGE POINTS & CASE STUDIES

## **1. Grant greater decision-making power to the local community level**

Local communities are supported and resourced so that they can be an equal partner with service providers and government and share in decision making about the things that matter to them- through community-led place-based approaches

Case Study 1: [British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform](#)

## **2. Fit-for-purpose funding and commissioning approaches**

Services are funded (and measured) in ways that mean that they can deliver what families and communities need, including being flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. Services are rewarded for working with other services to meet the individual needs of children and families.

Case Study 2 and 3: [The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project](#)

## **3. Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses**

The money that government spends in a local community is pooled and then allocated to funding the services / programs that are what community (and families) need and think is most important.

Case Study 2 and 3: [The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project](#)

## **4. Feedback loops from families and communities to government and service providers**

Services and government seek and take on board regular feedback from families and communities about how well they are meeting the needs of local communities and where they can improve.

Case Study 4: [Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group](#)

## **5. Amplify family and community voices as partners in program design and delivery**

It is standard practice to have families and communities as part of the design of services and programs – (including partnerships between community and different levels of government) so that they deliver what is important to those families and communities.

Case Study 5: [Tasmanian Child and Family Learning Centres](#)

## **6. Recognise families and those with lived experience as experts for the purposes of evidence, policy and decision-making**

When decisions are being made about policy, funding and programs, the real-life experience of families is heard and respected (and given as much weight as formal 'experts'), and this can be seen in the final decisions.

Case Study 6: [Working Together for 3 Year Olds Pilot](#)

# THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POTENTIAL OF THIS CLUSTER

Taking action on the leverage points in this cluster has real potential to transform the early years system and improve outcomes for children and their families in Australia, through empowering families and communities to be active participants in decision-making about the systems that impact their lives and influence the early childhood development outcomes of their children.

Implementing the leverage points in this cluster could be a key ingredient of a transformed early years system:

- requiring careful process design, genuine delegation of decision-making power to community and redesigned systems to reflect this change
- offering the potential to engage those who have not been well engaged previously and potentially change the trajectory for this cohort, indeed this may be the only way to truly engage marginalised groups, understand and address their needs
- removing practical barriers to engagement and participation (e.g. transport/complexity navigating) through localised, integrated and in-community responses
- removing the less tangible barriers to participation through resourcing of roles to focus on relationship building, community development and creating safe spaces.

# THE CONVERGENT EVIDENCE

## The rankings

In the assessment process, all leverage points were ranked for their potential to transform the early years system from 1-18 (highest to lowest transformative potential).

The leverage points in this cluster were ranked as follows:

Leverage Point	Ranking
LP1: Grant greater decision-making power to the local community level	4
LP2: Fit-for-purpose funding and commissioning approaches	8
LP3: Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses	15
LP4: Feedback loops from families and communities to government and service providers	13
LP5: Amplify family and community voices as partners in program design and delivery	12
LP6: Recognise families and those with lived experience as 'experts' for the purposes of evidence, policy and decision-making	7

## The expert advisory panel

The Expert Advisory Panel's ratings of the leverage points in this cluster reflected their view that these leverage points have 'medium' levels of transformational potential. The Panel noted the interconnection and interdependence between all the leverage points in this cluster and that the transformational potential of the individual leverage points was significantly lower than if they were activated in combination with others.

The Panel rated only two (of the six) in their top 10 and none in their top 5:

- LP3: Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses was rated equal 4th/5th
- LP1: Grant greater decision-making power to local community level was rated equal 6th/7<sup>th</sup>.

The Panel identified many examples in communities, particularly through place-based initiatives of different types, where communities and families are increasingly being empowered and able to influence program and service design. However, it was felt that communities and families being empowered to take a driver's seat would require implementation of all the leverage points in this cluster, alongside implementation of other leverage points, particularly:

- LP10: Recognise the voice of children in policy and program design
- LP11: Reform the culture of measurement and evaluation
- LP12: Enforce accountability for outcomes for children and families.

In addition, the Panel identified challenges in the feasibility of implementation due to the differing levels of support for community-led approaches across different actors in the system. For example, communities themselves may be much more enthusiastic than government for this type of systemic change.

## Field and family perspectives

This cluster was rated relatively low in the Field and Family survey, which may reflect the more structural and procedural nature of these leverage points and/or their dependency on other systemic changes to be most effective. Having said this, they rated *LP2: Fit for purpose funding and commissioning approaches* in the top 5 (at equal 4th/5th), indicating widespread awareness of the negative impacts of current funding and commissioning approaches on the responsiveness of the service system for children and families.

Field and families rated the big picture and systems-wide leverage points (*LP14: Ensuring all children have their basic material needs met*, *LP12: Government to guarantee equitable access to services for all children*, *LP9: Ensure service systems are staffed by high quality workforces*) as having the highest transformative potential (their top 3), suggesting a belief in the transformative potential of systems change at deepest level. Therefore, it is unsurprising that they rated the transformational potential of the leverage points in this cluster (other than LP2) relatively low, at 11, 13, 14, 15 and 17, as these go to the system patterns, structures and power dynamics.

## First Nations perspectives

Through our conversations with First Nations advisors, it was clear that this cluster of leverage points was seen to have significant transformational potential for First Nations children, families, and communities. Implementation of all these leverage points together would empower First Nations communities to determine their own priorities and participate in decision-making about what is required to meet the needs of their families and children and the funding services that offer holistic, culturally safe, and responsive supports, which will increase engagement and participation by families and children.

*"And the whole point is that, you know, community are building a place where they want to live where they feel safe, and where their kids feel safe."*

*"Localised engagement is so important. Communities are diverse and need different things – different ways for different communities – local voices and local decisions. Share the decision making - let us drive."*

*"We know what works for our jarjums. We need more opportunities to articulate it. We know what they need and can articulate it, but we don't get the opportunity."*

*"This is the most genuine attempt at actual community leadership, where it is community making decisions – place-based - for your neighbourhood in the community ...And it's actually about integrated service delivery. The pool and bucket funding is what enables the integrated service delivery, as well as the meeting and communication structures that we've got in place to ensure that staff across teams are working together, with the interests of those kids and families at the centre."*

*LP2 - Fit for purpose funding and commissioning approaches* was identified as having great potential to improve outcomes on the ground. The opportunities for long term, sustained and guaranteed funding for local, community led services, would enable services to respond flexibly to community needs, attract and retain staff on a long-term basis, build trust and ongoing relationships with families, offer opportunities for employment and development for community members and to become an established and trusted part of the community.

The significance of *LP5 - Amplifying family and community voices in program design and delivery* and *LP6 - Recognise families and those with lived experience as 'experts'*, was clearly illustrated:

*"The message gets lost by the time it gets back up to the decision makers. They don't have the cultural lens to interpret what they are hearing – and without the lived experience of going between both worlds they can't deliver the authentic message."*

## The formal evidence

The formal evidence scan identified a significant body of formal evidence including grey literature and a growing evidence base, that speaks to the benefits of genuine engagement with families and communities, community development and valuing lived experience expertise, particularly when working to improve outcomes in communities experiencing vulnerability and entrenched disadvantage.

Given the limitations of the project timeframe, we focused our evidence gathering on place-based approaches, and while we were only able to do a limited scan of the available formal evidence, we were able to gather valuable insights into each of the different leverage points and ways that they have been implemented in various contexts, both locally and internationally.

We note that there was a distinct lack of publicly available evaluation material, either for initiatives that are considered 'successful' and especially for those that were deemed 'unsuccessful'. This is a missed opportunity for us all to learn from the experiences of others (for more discussion about evidence go to **Part 2: The Approach** document).

Assessment of the *feasibility for implementation in the Australian context* of these leverage points was influenced by the highly localised nature of most place-based initiatives, the limited examples of scaling and the general lack of evaluation data. Leverage Points 1-5 were rated as medium feasibility despite the growing support for place-based approaches. However, *LP6 - Recognise families and those with lived experience as 'experts' for the purposes of evidence, policy and decision making* was rated as highly feasible for implementation.

Given the holistic nature of place-based initiatives and the interconnection between the leverage points in this cluster and others, readers may see that references and case studies selected for one leverage point are also relevant for others. Leverage Points 2 and 3 have been explored together, with a single case study for both.

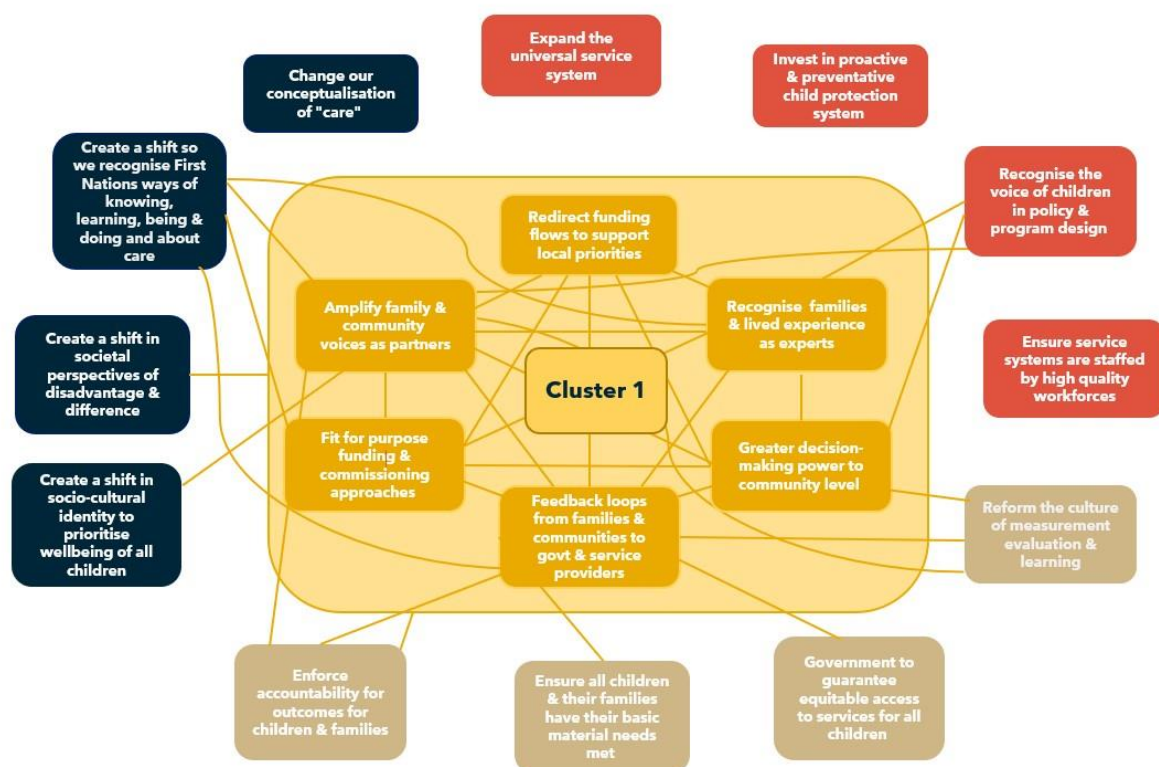
## The case studies

The case studies used to illustrate how these leverage points might be implemented are mostly Australian, place-based initiatives (from Tasmania, NSW and Victoria), meso level examples. However, as with many of the other macro level leverage points, we were unable to find an Australian case study for Leverage Point 1, using a Canadian case study.

- LP1 - British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform
- LP2 and LP3 - The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project
- LP4 - Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group
- LP5 - Tasmanian Child and Family Learning Centres
- LP6 - Working Together for 3 Year Olds Pilot

The reader will also find exploration of other Australian place-based initiatives in Case Study 11 (Cluster 3) and Case Study 17 (Cluster 4).

# LINKAGES WITH OTHER LEVERAGE POINTS



**Image 1. Cluster 1 linkages to other leverage points**

As noted above, this cluster is a natural bundle, that would all be implemented together as a package, for maximum impact. These are strongly interlinked, with all the leverage points linked to each other, some operating as enablers and others as consequential.

*LP1 - Grant greater decision-making power to the local community level is dependent on LP6 - Recognise families and those with lived experience as 'experts' for the purposes of evidence, policy and decision-making and LP5 - Amplify family and community voices as partners in program design and delivery.*

*LP2 - Fit-for-purpose funding and commissioning approaches includes LP3 - Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses and needs and LP4 - Feedback loops from families and communities to government and service providers to be effective.*

This cluster is also interlinked with:

- LP10 - Recognise the voice of children in policy and program design
- LP11 - Reform the culture of measurement and evaluation
- LP12 - Enforce accountability for outcomes for children and families
- LP13 - Government to guarantee equitable access to services for all children.



# LEVERAGE POINT 1 – Grant greater decision-making power to the local community level

## SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

### Leverage point description

**Grant greater decision-making power to the local community level** - this leverage point is about local communities being supported and resourced so that they can be an equal partner with service providers and government and share in decision making about the things that matter to them- through community-led place-based approaches.

### Why could this leverage point be transformational for the early years?

The granting of more decision-making power to local communities could be a key ingredient of a transformed early years system, involving families and the wider community in understanding the issues at hand, creating more locally appropriate and responsive solutions and having a formal role in decision-making about services and the direction of funding in local communities.

This leverage point has transformational potential both at a practical level, in terms of redesigning local service systems, and also around the power, relationships and roles of actors in the system, increased trust in the expertise of communities and local people as decision makers and a willingness from those who currently hold power to share it.

To realise the full impact of this leverage point, other leverage points would also need to be actioned to create the structural changes to support and enable it.

### Where we focused our evidence gathering

We focused on gathering evidence of examples where there has been formal granting greater decision-making power to citizens at a community level. We explored macro and meso level examples including: 'power sharing', 'shared decision making', place-based governance, decentralised decision-making, and different governance models for more inclusive and collaborative decision-making that include community, government and service providers.

### Key findings

In the top 5 rated leverage points, this leverage point came in at number 4, with very strong support for its transformational potential in the early years, from across the convergent evidence. It was considered that granting greater decision-making power to the local community level, has a high likelihood of success in the Australian context, with a relatively short timeframe for implementation with medium transformative potential.

This in part speaks to the breadth of ways in which this leverage point can be enacted. Granting greater decision-making power to the local community exists on a spectrum from rudimentary consultation through to total autonomy. A gamut of different approaches exists. Approaches that have been highlighted in this paper are collective leadership tables; often used by place-based initiatives and the

mini publics approach. Though both methodologies grant greater decision making to the local community, there are a number of key differences:

**Community-led place-based approaches** are increasingly common in Australia, often involving community advisory groups and or Community Leadership Tables, enabling the community to be involved in setting local priorities and collaborative approaches to addressing complex social issues. In this approach leadership groups are often made up of interested citizens and leaders with a stake in the issues. Their decision-making power often remains part of a shared decision-making process within the scope of supporting the backbone organisation's agenda and authority. The community is not empowered to make decisions at odds with the decisions of the backbone, government or service providers.

**Mini publics** are generally at government level and provide an opportunity for citizens to contribute directly to public decision making, through participatory governance. Various structures exist, such as citizen juries and citizen assemblies. Mini publics are made up of randomly selected citizens and intended to be representative of population. The principle behind this is that everyone affected by the topic in question has an equal chance of being selected.

Action on this leverage point entails changes to decision making about the system (i.e. who sets the agenda) and in the role of actors and connections across the systems (e.g. power, relationships and roles). The transformative potential of this individual leverage point would be magnified if it was supported by parallel implementation of the other leverage points in this cluster.

## Linkages to the other leverage points

This leverage point is a critical enabler of the other leverage points in Cluster 1, as community decision making is at the heart of putting community and families in the driver's seat.

The successful implementation of this leverage point in part relies on creating the capacity for community level decisions to be incorporated into policy and program design, as well as the funding of government and service provider responses in local communities.

In particular, *LP2 - Fit-for-purpose funding and commissioning approaches* would enable funding to follow decision making, rather than funding driving what is possible. While *LP3 - Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses* would further strengthen the response of government and service providers to supporting action that is consistent with local priorities and a shared community agenda.

*LP4 - Feedback loops from families and communities* and *LP6 - Recognising those with lived experience as experts*, are also an essential component of community decision making.

# FINDINGS FROM THE CONVERGENT EVIDENCE

## The rankings

CRITERIA	RATING/RANKING
Overall Ranking (1-18)	4
Level of <b>potential impact</b> if leverage point implemented	Medium
<b>Likelihood</b> of successful implementation in the Australian context	High
<b>Level of system</b> intervention/change	Meso level (Community level change)
<b>Likely timeframe</b> for change	5-10 years

## Expert advisory panel perspectives

As with all the leverage points in this cluster, the Expert Advisory Panel were clear that the transformational potential of the individual leverage points was greatly Increased If they were to be implemented as a package- as they are so Interlinked and reliant on each other for full Impact.

The Panel ranked this leverage point equal 6/7, with **75%** rating granting greater decision making to the local community level having **high potential for transformational impact**.

However, the Panel were of the view that this leverage point would have most impact where there is accountability on government and services to act on community decisions. The panel also highlighted that many place-based initiatives are challenged by short term funding cycles, and for communities to be part of decision-making processes it will take long-term resourcing, capacity building and backbone support.

The Panel thought that this leverage point would have **high desirability** for communities and families, sharing many examples where opportunities for greater community involvement in decision making would have a positive impact.

## Field and family survey rankings

This leverage point was ranked lower in the field and family survey, with an overall ranking of equal 14th/15th. **62%** of participants still rated this leverage point as **high potential impact**, possibly reflecting the limited impact as an individual leverage point, compared with others. It is noted that the scoring between leverage points was very close which meant this sat lower on the list despite having high potential.

## First Nations perspectives

Granting greater decision-making power to local communities is a key enabler for Indigenous self-determination, and our First Nations contributors confirmed just how important it is for First Nations

communities to be involved in making decisions about issues that have impact on families and community.

*“Localised engagement is so important. Communities are diverse and need different things – different ways for different communities. There needs to be local voices and local decisions. Share the decision making and let us drive.”*

## Findings from the formal evidence scan

There is less formal evidence for more recent place-based decision-making models. This is partly because the complex designs of place-based initiatives pose unique challenges for formal evaluation. There are, however, strong anecdotal examples of impact. And many place-based initiatives practice 'deep democracy' and governance approaches that are inspired by and draw upon the field of mini-publics and so some of the same enabling conditions apply. While the evidence on outcomes could be greater, there is increasingly clear guidance in the literature on implementation approaches and enabling conditions which are shared further below.

## Evidence from within the early years

### Place-based initiatives:

- Great importance is placed on community-led decision making in the literature, however, there is not yet strong evidence about its impact particularly when considered in the context of place-based initiatives.
- This lack of evidence is partly because the complex designs of place-based initiatives pose unique challenges for evaluation. Much of the literature also does not emphasise or evaluate the shared decision-making model as component.
- In a review of the existing literature around place-based initiatives in early childhood, Burgemeister et al. (2021) found that across the 83 outcomes reported all but one initiative demonstrated a positive outcome in at least one outcome measure. Of the six studies that examined outcomes more than once post baseline, 10 from 38 outcomes (26.3%) demonstrated positive sustained results (Burgemeister et al., 2021).
- Over time, evidence is likely to increase as there have been a range of place-based initiatives such as Logan Together, Children's Ground, Our Town, Hands up Mallee, Maranguka and Greater Shepparton Lighthouse are making progress both in terms of impact and evidence gathering. (See Leverage Points 2, 3, 4 and 6 for examples).

### Maranguka's Cross Sector Leadership Group:

- Maranguka is a community led initiative based in Bourke in Western NSW. It is 'a grassroots vision for improving outcomes and creating better coordinated support for vulnerable families and children through the true empowerment of the local Aboriginal community' (Ferguson and Lovric, 2019). The Maranguka Principles are a set of guidelines developed by Bourke Tribal Council, and all these guidelines are built into all commissioning and service agreements.
- Governance occurs via the Cross Sectoral Leadership Group, which is a meeting point for the Bourke tribal council non-government organisations, government philanthropists and service providers. Their role is to support the Bourke Tribal Council's 'Growing Our Kids Up Safe, Smart and Strong' strategy, which is operationalised through the community hub and an on the ground collective impact framework. The Bourke Tribal Council retains ultimate decision-making power.

## Evidence from other sectors

### Mini-public models:

- A diverse body of citizens, intended to be representative of the population is randomly selected to reason together about an issue of public concern. Examples exist in Canada, the Netherlands and Ireland.
- Evidence on the effectiveness of decision-making being granted to the local community exists for 'mini- publics', indicating they can improve local level outcomes and community participation, confidence, and agency.
- Studies showed that the impact of mini publics is greatest when community recommendations and decisions are translated into concrete actions by other decision makers and informs policy and in political decision making.
- There are a range of mini-public models. Examples include citizens' juries and citizens assemblies. These initiatives can last from a few days (citizen juries) to weeks or years (citizen assemblies). (Michels and Binnema, 2018, Stafinski et al., 2022).

### Citizen juries:

- In a Canadian Citizens' Jury to inform health system decision-makers, the focus was on how the public would prioritise funding treatments for ultra-rare disease populations.
- Outcomes were that the individual jurors became more familiar with the question and were exposed to a balanced collection of viewpoints, allowing for a more nuanced approach and dialogue (Stafinski et al., 2022).
- Similar conclusions were drawn in a review of a citizen jury in South Australia – that the citizens' jury increased participant knowledge of the issue and facilitated reflective discussion (Henderson et al., 2013).

### Citizen assemblies:

- *See Case Study 1* for more about two Canadian Citizen Assemblies that preceded a referendum on electoral reform, for which the assembly determined the options on the referendum and made recommendations for the referendum outcome.

### Empowered Communities:

- The Australian Government is working in a new way with First Nations communities to increase First Nations ownership and give First Nations people greater influence over decisions that affect them.
- It is working to set priorities, improve services and apply funding effectively at a regional level.
- Empowered Communities is active in 10 urban, rural and remote regions across Australia.
- The Australian Government is providing \$47 million from 2016 through 30 June 2024 to fund 'backbone organisations' in the 10 Empowered Communities regions. This supports critical capability for First Nations leaders as they work with their communities and partner organisations to identify and progress local priorities (NIAA, 2023).

# INSIGHTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

## Key enabling conditions

### Mini-public models:

- Outcomes are greater when formal arrangements are in place for the delegation of decision-making power - not just 'good faith' or informal power sharing that is susceptible to individual relationships and can be withdrawn at any time.
- More sustained impact also occurs when the decision-making process is well embedded in the system (i.e. political or legal) (Michels and Binnema, 2018, Stafinski et al., 2022).
- Initiatives with longer time frames have generally been more successful in mini public models.
- The process of decision making needs to enable (Michels and Binnema, 2018):
  - free public reasoning
  - equality and mutual respect
  - inclusion of different interests and subgroups
  - structured deliberation enabled by independent facilitators
  - dialogue and the exchange of arguments in small and diverse groups of citizens
  - interaction between actors involved in the deliberative forum.

### Place-based initiatives:

Key enablers identified for shared governance include:

- Anchor around a set of principles (TACSI, 2020, Sydney Policy Lab, 2021)
- Different distribution of power to traditional model: Shared power (TACSI, 2020) or balance of power with community (Sydney Policy Lab, 2021)
- Be open to innovating and learning together (Sydney Policy Lab, 2021, Moore et al., 2016)
- Have a systemic perspective (TACSI, 2020, TACSI, 2019)
- Actively include people (Moore et al., 2016, Sydney Policy Lab, 2021).

## Key barriers to implementation

### Influences from the wider system undermine local efforts:

- Community-led decision making occurs within and is affected by the wider system.
- An Australian study found that place-based community-led collaborative governance initiatives are still significantly impacted by government decisions and actions at the state and federal level.
- This includes funding criteria, service provision and policy decisions. For example: If funding for allied health is administered only for individual session, this may not align with how the local community would like services to be delivered (Greenway, 2021).

### When the process only engages with formally recognised community organisations:

- Community led decision making often relies on formal community organisations to represent the 'community' (Dinnie and Fischer, 2020).
- These community organisations are not always representative of diverse community views and assumes that a definable "community" exists and can speak with a unified voice. (Stafinski et al., 2022).

**When patterns of power are reproduced:**

- Co-production processes can inadvertently end up reproducing, rather than mitigating, existing unequal power relations (Turnhout et al. 2020)
- To protect against this requires intentionally acknowledging and working with unequal power (Turnhout et al., 2020).
- There can also be an inclination to work with formal organisations within community rather than engage in direct ways with community members which may fail to achieve the goal of being community led.

**Short term funding** can make community led decision making more complex, as it takes time to build the necessary structures and build relationships to break down the power imbalances.

## Key risks and unintended consequences

- The engagement of community does not always mean there is actually a desire or commitment to genuinely open up decisions making or share power. This can lead to unmet expectations disappointment for local people involved (Macq and Jacquet, 2023).
- When decisions made with community are not acted upon, this can be extremely disheartening for the community and there is a risk of future disengagement.
- Risk to government: involving community in decision-making may highlight significant misalignment between community need and what is being offered, creating unanticipated demand for change.
- The outcomes that matter most to consumers may not be the outcomes the system has always preference. This will require a realignment of perspectives and resources.



# Case Study 1 – British Columbia’s Citizens’ assembly on Electoral Reform

## Why did we choose this case study?

This case study is one of the few examples of large-scale power sharing and **formal delegation** of power. Examples of place-based initiatives can be found throughout this paper in the case studies of many other leverage points, including Leverage Point 4 which highlights the collective governance arrangements of Maranguka, a place based, community led initiative in Burke NSW.

## The initiative

The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly (January-November 2004) was a body created by the government of British Columbia, Canada. The Assembly was charged with investigating and recommending changes to improve the electoral system of the province.

The body was composed of 160 citizens chosen through a process of random selection initially and a chair who voted only in the event of a tie. Participation was however not compulsory, and after the initial random selection, citizens were able to opt out. The initial process produced no First Nations representatives, so to address this, two members were later selected from a previous shortlist.

These members met fortnightly for two mornings to deliberate about alternative voting arrangements. After issuing their recommendations, the question would be put to the electorate-at-large in a referendum held concurrently with the 2005 provincial election (Lang, 2007).

There were three distinct phases to deliberations:

- **The Learning Phase** - Members received expert lectures on electoral models in large-group sessions then met in small groups, followed by a plenary to discuss, and debate the topic.
- **The Public Hearings Phase** - Individual Assembly members hosted approximately 50 public hearings to listen to citizens’ opinions on electoral reform and gather feedback. Approximately 3,000 people participated in public hearings.
- **The Deliberation Phase** - Members were prompted to identify the most important values for their electoral system. These became the criteria that members would use to judge alternative electoral systems. The Assembly ultimately used secret ballots to tally its members’ judgments (Lang, 2007).

## Scale

- Location: British Columbia, Canada - a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy
- Population: 5.071 million
- Scale: State level (within a Federated system)

## Costs - investment and resourcing

The citizens' assembly was allocated \$5.5 million in public funds.

## Key actors

1. The Canadian Government
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Medium</b> <input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
What was their level of <b>Capability to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

2. Members of the public – who became members of the Citizens' Assembly
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Medium</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/>
What was their level of <b>Capability to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>High</b> <input type="checkbox"/>

## Evidence of outcomes/impact

The ultimate goal of reforming the electoral system was not achieved. Once the outputs from the Citizens Assembly were put to the general public through the referendum, not enough people supported the changes for them to pass. The key outcome was that the Citizens' Assembly provided opportunities for creative deliberation based on the lived experience of a broad array of citizens (Lang, 2007). This included:

- reframing the issues
- refocusing the terms of debate
- developing new criteria for evaluating policy options.

There were no outcomes specifically related to early childhood development. However, in terms of system forces, it speaks to the desired future state in terms of 'strengthening local communities' and creating intentional infrastructure for community connection and empowering local voices.

## Insights from implementation

### Key implementation features of the approach:

The unique feature of the Citizen's Assembly was that it moved **beyond consultation processes** that often limits community participation to being asked about a number of options or predetermined outcomes into true **participatory governance**. It is an important example that shows it is possible for a truly participatory process to occur and that large political institutions can make this a reality (Lang, 2007, Macq and Jacquet, 2023, Fournier et al., 2022).

## Key learnings from implementation

### The general public also requires educational investment:

Although the government supported Assembly members to become experts in electoral systems, it did not educate the general public adequately before the referendum, likely significantly impacting the results. It was also noted that while the deliberations of the Assembly were considered and in depth, the larger public debate about the proposal was comparatively shallow.

## **Mandating that one final solution had to be reached**

The Assembly mandate required that the different options that had been explored had to be narrowed down and eventually coalesce into one proposal. This was extremely challenging.

## **Enablers for success**

### **Support to participate:**

- Participants were paid an honorarium of \$150 per day.
- Day-care, transportation and accommodation were also provided to make it easier for people with lower incomes and those who lived far from Vancouver to participate.
- Independence from partisan politics.
- The Assembly worked independently from interference by external political actors, including members of the government that initiated the process.
- The secretariat that was hired to run the Citizens' Assembly operated independently from government.
- Members of the provincial legislature publicly maintained a 'hands off' approach to the process, appearing only at the opening and closing ceremonies of the Citizens' Assembly and the occasional public hearing.
- When organised political actors attempted to lobby the Assembly members, many Assembly members were disinclined to pay attention precisely because they viewed the presentations as politically motivated and nondeliberative in character (Lang, 2007).

## **Barriers to success**

### **Representativeness of participants:**

- Random selection of members was meant to make the body representative of the public at large, but citizens were not obliged to participate, as they are in legal juries. Instead, they were free to decline, so it is likely that many of the members who accepted were more active and civic-minded than the population at large.
- Participating in the Assembly might also have been more appealing to reformists than to those who were satisfied with the status quo.
- It remains unclear whether members felt they were representing their personal views, their districts, what emerged from the hearings, or the province at large.
- In terms of equality of the deliberations, inevitably, some members spoke more than others, with interventions from men outnumbering those of women or minorities.

### **Influence on process design:**

- Other critics suspect that the process of deliberation was consciously or unconsciously steered by staff. Members composed neither the structure of the Assembly's deliberations, its timing, nor its agenda. Staff decisions regarding these factors, as well as the educational materials and the selection of experts who spoke to Assembly members, may have biased their deliberations (Lang, 2007).

### **Failure to build broader community capacity or understanding:**

- As stated above, there was high capability, appetite and resourcing in the system for this initiative. However, a key drawback was that a similar level of capability was not built in the wider general public to understand the implications and importance of the work. This likely contributed to the

failure of the two referendums that were held. As stated by Lang (200&), *‘while the deliberations of the Assembly were rich and serious, the larger public debate about the proposal was anaemic by comparison’*.

## Risks and unintended consequences

- Given that the referendum did not pass, the risk is that this proved to be a negative experience for participants and the government that authorised the process.
- This may have contributed to a reduced future appetite for similar investments in community involvement, although this conclusion is not possible to substantiate.
- The Citizens Jury could come to a conclusion at odds with that of the traditional holders of power, creating additional complexity and tension.

## Sources of formal evidence

### Level of evidence

The available evidence	
Has the program been formally evaluated? <b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Overall Level of Evidence    Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
What evidence was available to compile this case study?	
<u>Informal Data</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Interview for the purpose of this project <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-existing interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Anecdotes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Case studies and quotes from existing literature</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop Participant Insights <input type="checkbox"/> Websites	<u>Formal Data</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Grey Literature <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Academic papers</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation Reports <input type="checkbox"/> Other: both Formal and Informal

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## LEVERAGE POINT 2: Fit for purpose funding and commissioning approaches

## LEVERAGE POINT 3: Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses

### SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

#### Leverage point description

**LP2 - Fit-for-purpose funding and commissioning approaches** so that services are funded (and measured) in ways that mean that they can deliver what families and communities need, including being flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. Services are rewarded for working with other services to meet the individual needs of children and families.

**LP3 - Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses** so that the money that government spends in a local community is pooled and then allocated to funding the services/programs that are what community (and families) need and think are most important.

These leverage points have been dealt with together because they are so closely linked. Leverage Point 3 can be seen as a sub-set of Leverage Point 2. Without Leverage Point 2 creating the enabling conditions for more flexible and innovative approaches to resourcing and funding, Leverage Point 3 would not be possible.

#### Why could this leverage point be transformational for the early years?

These leverage points are seen as critical to further strengthening the response of government and service providers in supporting action that is consistent with place-based approaches that support local priorities and a shared community agenda. The widely held belief is that place-based approaches will be more successful in creating improved outcomes for children, families and communities than current centralised approaches. Not least, place-based approaches offer the potential to engage with cohorts of children and families who have been left behind by traditional approaches and can potentially change the outcomes trajectory for this cohort.

The success of these leverage points in part relies on creating the capacity for community-led decision-making (Leverage Point 1) to be incorporated into the processes and systems that influence policy and program design as well as changes in the means of funding of government and service provider responses in local communities.

#### Where we focused our evidence gathering

The evidence showed that these leverage points could be interpreted in a number of different ways. However, we have chosen to focus primarily on different place-based funding approaches. We explored both large and small scale examples of ways that these leverage points may be implemented.



Given that these leverage points are about flexible funding and commissioning approaches and redirection of (existing) funding flows to support local priorities, we focused on place-based initiatives that receive some state or federal government funding.

For a case study to demonstrate how these leverage points might be implemented, we needed to identify a place-based initiative where there was publicly available information regarding Government's involvement in the finance and government arrangements.

## Key findings

Leverage Point 2 was ranked at number **8** out of 18, which was significantly higher than the ranking for Leverage Point 3, at **15** out of 18. This difference in the overall rating, reflects the much higher rating of Leverage Point 2 in the Family and Field survey and our First Nations contributors, who emphasised the potential for transformative change if funding and commissioning approaches were able to respond flexibly to the needs and priorities of local communities.

Place-based approaches, which often involve pooling resources from multiple levels of Government are emerging across Australia (*see other Cluster 1 Case Studies for examples*). However, these are most often program-specific, not a community wide approach to pooling funding, and the total is a small percentage of the total of government spending.

The Australian Government, Department of Social Services has recently formed the National Centre for Place Based Collaboration, and adoption of place-based approaches are expanding across Australia and internationally. There is also an appetite to support shared funding models with government and place-based approaches among Australian Philanthropic funders (Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children, 2023; ten20 foundation, 2019).

Implementation of these leverage points could result in transformational changes to systems structures, beyond shifting decision making and greater power to local community. If all funding and resources going into a community was pooled and redirected to respond to the priorities of the local community, it would enable tailored responses to challenges, responsive to the local community need and complexity of child and family needs, rather than delivering a range of unlinked, fragmented services funded through siloed, service-driven mechanisms. However, Governments at all levels would need to commit to large-scale changes funding policies, processes and budget allocations. This is unlikely to occur in the near future, however smaller/individual initiatives are emerging which may prove the concept and build momentum towards this change.

## Linkages to the other leverage points

These leverage points, particularly Leverage Point 2, are linked to many others, as more flexible funding and commissioning approaches are a key enabler for maximum impact, particularly in place-based approaches, and for implementation of the following:

- LP1 - Grant greater decision-making power to the local community level
- LP4 - Feedback loops from families and communities to government and service providers
- LP5 - Amplify family and community voices as partners in program design and delivery
- LP6 - Recognise families and those with lived experience as 'experts' for the purposes of evidence, policy and decision making
- LP10 - Recognise the voice of children in policy and program design
- LP11 - Reform the culture of measurement, evaluation and learning
- LP12 - Enforce accountability for outcomes for children and families.

# FINDINGS FROM THE CONVERGENT EVIDENCE

## The rankings

### *Leverage Point 2: Fit-for-purpose funding and commissioning approaches*

CRITERIA	RATING/RANKING
Overall Ranking (1-18)	8
Level of <b>potential impact</b> if leverage point implemented	Medium
<b>Likelihood</b> of successful implementation in the Australian context	High
<b>Level of system</b> intervention/change	Meso level (Community level change)
<b>Likely timeframe</b> for change	5-10 years

### *Leverage Point 3: Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses*

CRITERIA	RATING/RANKING
Overall Ranking (1-18)	15
Level of <b>potential impact</b> if leverage point implemented	Medium
<b>Likelihood</b> of successful implementation in the Australian context	Medium
<b>Level of system</b> intervention/change	Meso level (Community level change)
<b>Likely timeframe</b> for change	5-10 years

## Expert advisory panel perspectives

Leverage Point 2 was one of the few, where the Expert Advisory Panel's ratings were quite different to the other sources. The Panel ranked LP-2 **17th/18th**, with 33% rating it as having low potential for transformational change. This low rating was partly informed by their own experience of previous 'changes' to funding and commissioning, greater flexibility etc, which do not deliver real change. They were also doubtful that changing funding and commissioning approaches alone, without wholesale changes at all levels of the services systems would be transformational.

Leverage Point 3 was ranked significantly higher at equal 4th/5th by the Panel. They generally felt that this approach was desirable and required an ongoing funding commitment from both Government and other funders. Authentic partnership with transparency and accountability is essential for success.

Implementation was seen as highly scalable and consideration needed to be given to creating a robust governance structure and ensuring work in this area was across silos and sectors and based clearly upon local need. They acknowledged the current tensions between competing for funding and working in partnership.

## Field and family survey rankings

In a perfect reverse of the Expert Advisory Panel ratings, the Field and Family survey ranked:

- *Leverage Point 2: Fit for purpose funding and commissioning approaches equal 5th/6th*
- *Leverage Point 3: Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses 17<sup>th</sup>.*

## First Nations perspectives

Our First Nations contributors thought that ‘fit-for-purpose’ or flexible funding and commissioning could be quite transformative for First nations families and communities, creating a mechanism for long-term investment, local adaptations, measurement of outcomes that matter to communities and more support for locally designed programs.

*"Localised engagement is so important. Communities are diverse and need different things – different ways for different communities – local voices and local decisions. Share the decision making – let us drive."*

This was identified as a leverage point that would make a huge difference to ECD outcomes on the ground, as it would ideally allow for long-term investment in local, holistic, culturally safe and responsive services and supports, increasing engagement and participation by families and children.

*"We know what works for our jarjums. We need more opportunities to articulate it. We know what they need and can articulate it, but we don't get the opportunity."*

Long term, sustainable and guaranteed funding for local, community led services would deliver numerous benefits for communities, families and children including enabling services to respond flexibly to community needs, attract and retain staff on a long-term basis, build trust and ongoing relationships with families, offer opportunities for employment and development for community members and to become an established and trusted part of the community.

*"This is the most genuine attempt at actual community leadership, where it is community making decisions – place-based - for your neighbourhood in the community...And it's actually about integrated service delivery. The pool and bucket funding is what enables the integrated service delivery, as well as the meeting and communication structures that we've got in place to ensure that staff across teams are working together, with the interests of those kids and families at the centre."*

## Findings from the formal evidence scan

Place-based approaches may be defined as: a collaborative, long-term approach to build thriving communities delivered in a defined geographic location. This approach is ideally characterised by partnering and shared design, shared stewardship, and shared accountability for outcomes and impacts (Dart, 2018, p.7).

- The evaluation of place-based approaches is complex and demonstrating outcomes is not straightforward. Place-based interventions focused on children 0-5 years have been implemented in high income countries (USA, UK, Australia), and whilst individual studies show promise, there is a developing evidence base for the effectiveness of place-based interventions. This is because studies are heterogenous by definition, to ensure they are adapting and servicing the needs of

specific neighbourhoods/places. Whilst some studies show effectiveness in specific areas, this is not always replicated in subsequent studies or follow up (Glover et al., 2021).

- An additional complexity comes from differences in the outcomes that matter to community and those that matter to government.

## Evidence from within the early years

There are a number of initiatives internationally and locally where funding flows across departmental silos have been redirected to support local priorities and responses.

- Place based interventions focused on children 0-5 years have been implemented in high income countries (USA, UK, Australia), and whilst individual studies show promise, there is insufficient evidence for the effectiveness of place-based interventions. This is because studies are heterogeneous by definition, to ensure they are adapting and servicing the needs of specific neighbourhoods/places. Whilst some studies show effectiveness in specific areas, this is not always replicated in subsequent studies or follow up (Glover et al., 2021).
- Key examples of place-based interventions that have been formally evaluated in high income countries are: Sure Start Initiative UK, Headstart Initiative USA, Communities for Children Australia (Glover et al., 2021). Whilst Sure Start (see Leverage Point 13) was funded by the UK Government, it relied on the Local Authority (local government) and local family support service providers (e.g. spanning health/education/childcare) in each area of implementation to act. Each Local Authority had extensive local autonomy over how it fulfilled its mission to improve and create services as needed. (Department of Education UK, 2010).
- The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Program (see case study) is a place-based community impact initiative that works to improve the outcomes of people in the local community from conception to career. Evaluation in 2020 (Seigman, 2020) indicated GSLP is showing some promising outcomes including:
  - increased community connection
  - acting as a catalyst for change-change can lead to more change
  - increased connection for children and young people and increasing aspiration
  - a flow on effect of change beyond the intended target - e.g. helping a child supports the school
  - schools: catalytic change and decreased stigma (Seigman, 2020).

## Evidence from other sectors

- Primary Health Networks are federally funded independent organisations that are intended to manage health regions. There are 31 networks across Australia. PHNs use a people centred approach to assess the health needs in their region and commission accordingly. They connect health services and work closely with providers to better utilise resources. They have a skills-based board, GP led clinical councils and community advisory committees (Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, 2023).
- Aged Care - Multi-Purpose Services Program (Australia): combines funding for aged care services from the Australian Government with state and territory health services. This joint initiative means small regional and remote communities can offer flexible aged care services that meet the needs of their community. The MPS Program provides health and aged care services in areas that cannot support both a hospital and a separate aged care home. It aims to give regional and remote communities improved access to health and aged care services that meet community needs, a

more innovative and flexible service delivery model, improved quality of care, improved cost-effectiveness and viability of services. (Woods, 2019).

- Following the devolution of Health and Social Care, the Greater Manchester Population Health Plan was developed: This entailed a new structure, breaking down barriers between services and broadening focus. New local powers were accompanied by budgetary reforms. Nationally, health and social care were brought together through an innovative £6 billion devolution deal. An additional £450 million Health and Social Care Transformation Fund was agreed to support the development of a new health and social care system. The Greater Manchester Population Health Plan, published in 2017, set out how it was possible to use devolution opportunities. This plan was initially supported by a £30 million Transformation Fund investment. Evaluation indicates a substantial increase in school readiness and a smoking prevalence rate falling twice as fast as the national average (Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, 2019).

# INSIGHTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

## Key enabling conditions

A number of key enabling conditions have been identified to support programs that work utilising a fit for purpose funding and commissioning approach that supports the redirection of funds to address local priorities:

- Sustainable, flexible and adequate resourcing is a key enabler of effective place-based approaches (Wilks, 2015, ten20 foundation, 2019).
- Long term government funding, including the pooling of funds from multiple government departments (Alderton et al., 2022b, Alderton et al., 2022a).
- Decreasing the administrative burden around seeking and maintaining fundings (Alderton et al., 2022a).
- Governance processes and evaluations that are adequately resourced and include compensation, where appropriate for participation (Alderton et al., 2022a).
- Ensuring end to end evaluation is adequately supported via a specific funding allocation (Alderton et al., 2022a).
- Authority around resource allocation and funding must align with shared decision-making processes (Alderton et al., 2022a).
- Current government commissioning and finance systems are barriers to the flexibility necessary in a place-based approach (Alderton et al., 2022a).

## Barriers to implementation

Alderton et al. (2022a) identified multiple barriers in the Australian context that can hinder this approach to funding and commissioning:

- in Australia, the complexity of our three-tier government system can hinder big picture and systems thinking
- siloing, unclear accountability, poor alignment and integration between tiers of Government can also hinder funding allocation and commissioning approaches
- increasing centralisation in public policy decision making
- short term contracts and funding cycles
- focus on short term outcomes
- frequent movement and turnover of staff in government.

## Risks and unintended consequences

There are a number of risks in local redirection of funding:

- The risk of inadequate oversight and accountability of programs, which can be ameliorated through adequate governance and reporting mechanisms.
- Poor administration of funds at a local level can hinder these initiatives.
- 'Reach' of programs may result in some areas being well serviced and others not as well.
- The quality of programs may vary between areas: Evaluation of Sure Start indicated that the lead agency correlated consistently with the effectiveness of programmes (Belsky et al., 2006).

# Case Study 2 and 3 - The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project

## Why did we choose this case study?

### **LP 2. Fit-for-purpose funding and commissioning approaches**

The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project (GSLP) has a unique funding model - they have an agreement with the Victorian Department of Education to utilise a flexible funding approach, rather than Government funding specific services, they provide workplans on intended use of funding and regular reporting. Large Philanthropic Contributors have also agreed that rather than having strong involvement in funding allocation and funding to predetermined outputs, GSLP will report against an agreed plan.

### **LP 3. Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses**

GSLP is a strong example of where funding flows have been redirected to support local priorities. Since being established, GSLP have conducted extensive consultation and support a wide variety of responses across the area. They are also able to redirect funding in response to emerging local priorities. For example, in times of local crisis, such as the 2022 flood, they were able to rapidly pivot to food distribution, harnessing existing social capital and resourcing.

## The initiative

The GSLP Lighthouse was established in 2014 as a place-based, collective impact initiative, that works to improve the outcomes of people in the local community from conception to career.

They work to ensure all children, young people and families in Greater Shepparton reach their full potential and thrive. Lighthouse taps into and aligns resources within their community and beyond to build capability and prevent issues such as social isolation, systemic disadvantage and poor school engagement (Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project, 2023). GSLP functions as an enabler, leading a movement for change in the region by supporting, facilitating advocating and leading. They are largely a backbone organisation rather than a direct service provider.

## Scale

This initiative covers the Greater Shepparton area in Victoria, with a population of 68,522 forecast to grow by 19% by 2036 (Greater Shepparton City Council, 2021-2022).

## Costs – investment and resourcing

In 2022-23 FY total revenue was \$1,833,473.00 and total expenditure \$1,619,887.00.

Revenue sources were: 54.54% from Government, 14.96% from donations and bequests, 30.50% from other revenue.

Source: <https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/6013a269-3aaf-e811-a961-000d3ad24182/profile>



## Key actors

<b>1. State Government</b>
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
What was their level of <b>Capability to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Medium</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>2. Local Community</b>
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>High</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
What was their level of <b>capability to act</b> on this leverage point? <b>Low</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>3. Philanthropic Partners</b>
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
What was their level of <b>capability to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Medium</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/>

## Evidence of outcomes/impact

A recent evaluation of the GSLP (Social Ventures Australia, 2023) demonstrated the following outcomes:

- Lighthouse has a unique flexibility in order to respond rapidly to community needs.
- There is a belief by partners that they are contributing to improving outcomes for the community, children and young people.
- As a result of being engaged in Lighthouse initiatives, children and young people have a strong sense of feeling safe, valued and loved.
- As a result of their engagement in Lighthouse initiatives, families are more connected to community.
- The community recognise Lighthouse as authentically listening to, understanding and acting upon their needs (Social Ventures Australia, 2023).

## Insights from implementation

### Key implementation features of the funding approach:

- The GSLP is a place-based, community led initiative with a flexible funding approach. Rather than reporting outputs to Government they:
  - Provide the Department with a clear workplan on intended use of funding over the year then report on their expenditure quarterly and in a final report. The requirement by Government for regular reporting is not waived; changes are with regard to what is reported.
  - Have a dedicated local department contact, the Service Support Manager in the Goulburn Area, and meet regularly with GSLP Executive Officer to discuss shared opportunities to leverage change and project management.

- Have an advisory group chaired by the Department bringing together government leaders representing housing, disability and child protection, justice and community safety, police and local council. This group supports the building of relationships, discussion of local priorities and shared issues and supports identification of opportunities across sectors, government and community.
- Philanthropic partners have also agreed to comply with a flexible, hands off approach to administration of funds.

## Key learnings

- The importance of a flexible funding approach: In order to respond flexibly to need, a flexible funding approach is essential. This type of funding approach allowed a rapid pivot to meet community needs: e.g. during 2022 floods and COVID-19 pandemic.
- Acceptance on both sides of the funding relationship: Funders must be open to a different set of measures and agreed reporting standards whilst Funding recipients also need to acknowledge accountability, robust monitoring and reporting. The funding is not 'do as you like with it'.
- The need to prioritise partnership and power sharing: In order for this approach to be successful, the community and the organisations involved must share the power and work in partnership.
- The need for long term funding and backbone support.
- The importance of community level, locally collected data.
- Utilisation of community capital.
- General trust and a culture of openness between community, philanthropy and government.
- Government's acknowledgement of the deep listening and authentic engagement required to build this type of funding approach.
- Small 'test' programs locally allow trials of initiatives that would not otherwise commence: e.g. flood donations.

## Enablers for success

There are a number of systemic enablers that support this model including:

- flexible funding by Government
- a 'hands off' approach to funding by Philanthropy
- power-sharing
- backbone approach: providing the backbone support required in order to support this model.

There are also a number of relationship enablers that allow the Lighthouse Project to function:

- trust and authentic engagement through deep listening
- flexible support provision supported by the flexible funding model which enables this
- the ability to listen to community and rapidly pivot to community need
- creating local solutions codesigned with the community to address local challenges.

## Barriers to success

- Policy alignment across state and local government to support long term objectives (Seigman, 2020).
- Challenges of completing genuine codesign in the context of existing government models and structures (Seigman, 2020).

- Collaboration with services in other sectors, such as health services. Factors such as KPIs in different service sectors and scarcity of funding can contribute to this issue (Seigman, 2020).

## Risks and unintended consequences

- By not adequately integrating with other components of the service system, such as health services and Early Childhood services, GSLP risk **creating another silo**.
- **Government funding remains on three-year cycle:** Although there is a long-term commitment from Philanthropists to support, this needs to be matched by a long-term commitment from government.
- **Risk of reporting not meeting the needs of funders:** though the commissioning approach has shifted, clearer planning and accountability is still required.
- **GSLP relies very much on community engagement and trust:** This is a strength however may also be a risk as the approach is dependent on building and maintaining that relationship (Seigman, 2020).

## Sources of formal evidence

### Level of evidence

The available evidence	
Has the program been formally evaluated?    Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Overall Level of Evidence    Low <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/>	
What evidence was available to compile this case study?	
<u>Informal Data</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Interview for the purpose of this project <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-existing interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Anecdotes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Case studies and quotes from existing literature</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop Participant Insights <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Websites</b>	<u>Formal Data</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Grey Literature</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Academic papers</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Evaluation Reports</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Other: both Formal and Informal

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# LEVERAGE POINT 4 – Feedback loops from families and communities to government and service providers

## SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

### Leverage point description

**Feedback loops from families and communities to government and service providers** - focuses on making sure that there are feedback loops and communication processes that enable families and communities to provide regular and ongoing feedback to services and government about how well services, supports and programs are addressing local priorities and meeting the needs of families.

### Why could this leverage point be transformational for the early years?

Implementation of this leverage point, particularly in combination with others, has potential to transform the service system by making it more responsive to the needs of children and families. By being better informed about what works and building an evidence base for more data driven decision making, we could see great improvement in the effectiveness of services, as well as reducing the mismatch between service design and community and family needs.

For families and communities, actively participating in the ongoing development and adaptation of the service system can be empowering, by recognising and valuing their expertise and lived experience.

### Where we focused our evidence gathering

As a common feature of place-based initiatives is the establishment of community priorities and the creation of effective feedback loops between families and service providers about what is needed to support improved outcomes, we focused on identifying place-based initiatives where formal feedback loops between community and services have been established, including through Community Leadership Tables.

### Key findings

This leverage point was rated at **13** out of 18, reflecting that implementation of other leverage points in this cluster, would be needed for maximum impact. Establishing feedback loops are valuable, however, their transformational potential is dependent on other conditions being in place, including mechanisms to ensure that something is done with the information received and that services have capacity to adapt to meet local needs.

Many place-based initiatives demonstrate the importance of family and community voice in the development of programs and services. However, the concept of utilising feedback loops involving family and community voice to develop outcomes takes this a step further and significantly challenges the current state of the system, including the vast majority of current government funding and commissioning processes (*see Leverage Points 2 and 3 for more about funding and commissioning to support local priorities*).

This is an emerging area of practice, with isolated pockets in the service system improving the way they work with families through feedback loops. But often it looks more like ‘consumer’ feedback, things like health services consulting on food and beverage options, rather than broad engagement with families and communities about substantive issues.

First Nations led organisations like Maranguka and Children’s Ground are pioneering genuinely ‘community-led’ approaches to shared governance arrangements and establishment of formal feedback loops, where community is at the table identifying community priorities and indicators and agreed ways of monitoring progress.

Alongside this area of practice, issues around data sovereignty and the intersection between the gathering, holding, sharing and use of data are also being considered, with innovative approaches being tested in place-based initiatives across Australia (*see Case Study 11*).

To embed feedback loops (and the corresponding commitment to be responsive to that feedback) as a standard practice in the service system, would take time, mindset shifts about valuing the contributions of those with lived experience (*see Leverage Point 6*) and changes to existing structures and processes.

## Linkages to the other leverage points

This leverage point is a key to this whole cluster, and it works as an enabler for the other leverage points in this cluster. Feedback loops are a vital input for *LP11 - Reform the culture of measurement and evaluation* and also *LP12 - Enforce accountability for outcomes for children and families*.

As noted, it is interlinked with:

- LP1 - Grant greater decision-making power to the local community level
- LP2 - Fit-for-purpose funding and commissioning approaches
- LP3 - Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses
- LP5 - Amplify family and community voices as partners in program design and delivery
- LP6 - Recognise families and those with lived experience as ‘experts’ for the purposes of evidence, policy and decision making
- LP11 - Reform the culture of measurement and evaluation
- LP12 - Enforce accountability for outcomes for children and families.

# FINDINGS FROM THE CONVERGENT EVIDENCE

## The rankings

This leverage point was rated consistently at across the different sources of evidence.

CRITERIA	RATING/RANKING
Overall Ranking (1-18)	13
Level of <b>potential impact</b> if leverage point implemented	Medium
<b>Likelihood</b> of successful implementation in the Australian context	High
<b>Level of system</b> intervention/change	Meso level (Community level change)
<b>Likely timeframe</b> for change	5-10 years

## Expert advisory panel perspectives

The Expert Advisory Panel ranked this leverage point equal **12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup>**, with more rating it's transformational potential medium or low, than high.

As with most others in this cluster, this leverage point was seen as having much greater impact if implemented as a part of a package, rather than individually. The Panel highlighted the limited value of establishing feedback loops without supporting mechanisms to ensure that feedback is acted on and other practical implementation challenges. These included:

- The need for capacity building in different ways of working together, both for community to feel empowered to provide feedback, and for government and services to genuinely listen and be able to respond effectively.
- Flexibility in funding and commissioning that allows services to respond and adapt to feedback.
- Mechanisms that ensure accountability for acting on feedback.

## Field and family survey rankings

The Field and Family survey also ranked this leverage point at number **13**, with 64% rating it as having high potential for transformational impact. This ranking may again be a reflection of the limitations of establishing feedback loops without corresponding requirement for action but also the value of creating communication channels so that family and community views are heard.

## First Nations perspectives

We heard from our First Nations contributors about the importance of establishing feedback loops directly from community to government and services, so that the needs of community and family are heard and understood. Key to this understanding is having First Nations people on the receiving end of the feedback, embedded in government and services, so that the messages don't get lost in translation.



*"The message gets lost by the time it gets back up to the decision makers. They don't have the cultural lens to interpret what they are hearing – and without the lived experience of going between both worlds they can't deliver the authentic message."*

The voices of families and community are integral to the Children's Ground approach, and facilitating feedback loops from community to government and services at all levels is one of the many ways that the Children's Ground team support their communities.

*"A big part of one of our platform areas is community development, the community sets their priorities. In Williston, they decided they wanted their housing fixed up. So, Children's Ground can't afford that. But we could arrange for this volunteer group of traders to come in and they did audits of all of the houses, then they came back for another visit and fix them all up alongside the families."*

## Findings from the formal evidence scan

This is an emerging area of practice. Whilst it is being done to greater or lesser extents and utilising different methodology, there is still a significant way to go with this work and a limited evidence base. There is a clear need for feedback loops, with much evidence regarding the disconnect between service provision and community need, across many sectors (TACSI, 2019).

Moore et al (2016) identified a disconnect between the traditional service systems capacity to provide support for families and the needs of contemporary families, identifying 'community engagement' (which includes formal feedback loops) as a potential strategy for addressing this disconnect (see *Leverage Point 5 and Case Study 5* for more.).

## Evidence from within the early years

As noted above, there are some stand-out examples of implementation from place-based initiatives that have established shared governance arrangements which establish feedback loops and ways of measuring impact that rely on the feedback loops from community to government and services.

Those mentioned below are only some of the examples available, and most of these are also included as case studies in this report.

### **Maranguka's Cross Sector Leadership Group:**

- Maranguka is a First Nations, community-led initiative based in Bourke in Western NSW. It is a grassroots vision for improving outcomes and creating better coordinated support for vulnerable families and children through the true empowerment of the local Aboriginal community (Ferguson and Lovric, 2019).
- Maranguka Community Hub is the working arm of the Bourke Tribal Council, which represents 22 local clans. Through cross-sector, collaborative governance community, all three levels of government, NGOs, philanthropic supporters and service providers are working collaboratively to achieve the outcomes of the community's 'Growing Our Kids up Safe Smart and Strong' strategy.
- One of the unique elements of their shared governance are the Maranguka Principles, a set of guidelines for ways of working together, that all partners have committed to and have been built into all commissioning and service agreements (*see the accompanying Case Study 4*).

### **Our Town:**

- Our Town is a mental health initiative philanthropically funded and implemented in partnership with TACSI and Clear Horizon. Our Town's aim is to develop community-based responses to mental

health and wellbeing in South Australian regional towns, whilst ensuring towns and regions retain power regarding what is best for their community.

- Our Town is a demonstration of rural and regional community's potential to lead local change and local responses to health and wellbeing challenges.

#### **Children's Ground:**

- Children's Ground is a First Nations systems solution to empower children and communities to achieve social, cultural and economic agency and lifelong wellbeing.
- Led from the community level, the Children's Ground Approach addresses the key social, cultural and economic determinants targeting key building blocks to achieve long term generational and sustainable change (Children's Ground, 2019).
- Children's Ground has a comprehensive 25-year evaluation plan, encompassing both an Arretne evaluation framework and a western evaluation framework. Early-stage evidence of Children's Ground Central Australia indicated some promising outcomes (*see Case Study 17*).

#### **Hands Up Mallee:**

- Hands up Mallee is a place-based collective impact initiative established in 2015 that brings local leaders, community and organisations together to address complex social issues and achieve positive health and wellbeing outcomes for children, young people, and their families in Mildura, Victoria. They have recently engaged in collaborative capacity building activities with community and services to co-design an evaluation framework to focus on outcomes and impacts that truly matter to children and families in Mildura (Clear Horizon, 2023) (*see Case Study 11*).

#### **Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project:**

- GSLP is a collective impact program that has negotiated with Government to measure their impact via outcome measures that reflect community priorities, rather using traditional outcome measures (Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project, 2023) (*see Case Study 2&3*).

#### **Stronger Places, Stronger People (SPSP) sites:**

- DSS funds 10 place-based, collective impact sites across Australia. These sites have implemented various approaches to ensuring feedback loops from families and communities to government and services. SPSP sites include Maranguka and Hands Up Mallee, Logan Together, Gladstone Region engaging in action Together (GRT) Burnie Works (Tas) and others.

### **Evidence from other sectors**

#### **Lived experience representation and leadership:**

- This approach is common in the mental health system and involves those with lived experience becoming leaders or advocates, often representing consumers on government committees and boards. A recent report that explored the experience of Lived Experience Leaders highlighted a number of challenges including unrealistic expectations, serving someone else's agenda, not being valued and feeling 'less than' in the process (Waddingham, 2021).
- Following the Mental Health Commission findings, NSW has developed a lived experience framework for participation. It is not yet evaluated. (Mental Health Commission of New South Wales, 2018).

### Coproduction and codesign:

- Codesigning the Transition of Accommodation Services: TACSI and DHS staff worked together with clients to understand their needs and desires in transition of services. They integrated a series of feedback loops into the process and developed a series of principals and guidelines based upon their work.

### Community/consumer engagement:

- There is no commonly agreed definition of Community engagement (Moore et al., 2016). 'Consumer engagement' and 'codesign' have become a catch all in recent years for a variety of different strategies, some of which are extremely superficial. (TACSI).
- Referencing the IAP2's *Public Participation Spectrum*, in order to share views on outcomes, engagement with communities must go beyond 'inform' and 'consult' into 'involve', 'collaborate' and ultimately 'empower'. This is a challenge in existing systems and structures. (Moore et al., 2016).

**Table 1: IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum**

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced that decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

# INSIGHTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

## Key enabling conditions

Taking a holistic approach to engaging with families and communities, is an emerging area of practice. Key enabling conditions identified so far include:

- Anchor around a shared set of principles (Tacsi, 2020, Sydney Policy Lab, 2021).
- Power: Different distribution of power to traditional model: Shared power (Tacsi, 2020, TACSI) or balance of power with community (Sydney Policy Lab, 2021).
- Be open to innovating and learning together (Sydney Policy Lab, 2021, Ferguson and Lovric, 2019, Moore et al., 2016).
- Have a systemic perspective (Tacsi, 2020, TACSI, 2019).
- Actively include people (Moore et al., 2016, Sydney Policy Lab, 2021).

## Key barriers to implementation

- Government has historically been poor at engaging consumers in decision making, as this may involve a significant change in practice. Though consultation is occurring more frequently, there are significant barriers to implementing and acting upon community need, particularly when it conflicts with government service delivery, commissioning, outcome measures and policy (Moore et al., 2016).
- Adequate evaluation of these initiatives also poses a challenge. Evaluation funding is not always included and how we consider outcomes and evaluation also needs to change if we are truly considering family and community feedback loops.

## Key risks and unintended consequences

- When consumer engagement occurs, then the results are not acted upon, this can be extremely disheartening for the community and there is a risk of disengagement.
- Risk to Government: Significant misalignment between community need and what is being offered.
- The outcomes that matter most to consumers may not be the outcomes the system has always preference. This will require a realignment of perspectives and resources.
- Can preference those with the loudest voices and may not get the perspectives of those most at need; disengaged and marginalised.
- Risk that information won't be acted upon, isn't a genuine process.

# Case Study 4 - Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group

## Why did we choose this case study?

This case study spotlights a current example of the establishment and ongoing use of formal feedback loops from families and communities to government and service providers' in the Australian context, which is transforming the local service system and improving outcomes for children, families and community.

## The initiative

Maranguka Community Hub (Maranguka) is an exemplar of empowerment for First Nations communities. Maranguka is a community-led, place-based collective impact initiative, underpinned by cultural governance, cross-sector collaboration and self-determination.

As the working arm of the Bourke Tribal Council, who represents 22 local clans, the Maranguka backbone team works on behalf of the community. Maranguka is Australia's only operational Justice Reinvestment program, working collaboratively to reduce crime and violence and improving life outcomes for the community of Bourke NSW.

The work of Maranguka is guided by the elements of the community's co-designed *Growing them up Smart, Safe and Strong Strategy*, which is supported by a co-designed outcomes evaluation framework.

Maranguka is also pioneering with their Community Data Approach. The community defines the parameters for Maranguka's research, evaluation and implementation, and the data stories told. Maranguka has embedded Indigenous data sovereignty principles and practice into the monitoring, learning and evaluation framework of the initiatives (SEER 2023).

While Maranguka offers many lessons for implementation, in this case study we have focused on Maranguka's governance ecosystem, which is an outstanding example of embedding feedback loops between families and community and government and services.

## Cross-Sector Leadership and Governance

The Cross Sector Leadership Group (CSLG) is the meeting place for representatives from local stakeholders, including Bourke Tribal Council (representing community), non-government organisations, all three levels of government, philanthropists and service providers; all of whom participate in regular meetings, with community and government at the table, providing immediate feedback loops to services and government.

A Cross-Sector Leadership Executive evolved from the CSLG when it became clear there was need to have a smaller group to progress key aspects of the work. Both groups include senior representatives from all levels of government, with authority to make decisions and unblock systemic barriers and to create the authorising environment for services to work differently with community and families. Supporting the priority actions of the Safe Smart Strong Strategy.

## The Maranguka CSLG and CSLE (continued)

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE CROSS SECTOR LEADERSHIP GROUP AND EXECUTIVE

#### KEY

- **Bourke Tribal Council (BTC)**  
Community Leadership. Developed the *Safe Smart Strong* Strategy, operationalised through Maranguka.
- **Cross Sector Leadership Executive Subgroups**  
Working in key areas between Cross Sector Leadership Executive (CSLE) meetings, reports to CSLE.
- **Cross Sector Leadership Executive (CSLE)**  
Quarterly meetings of organisations with resources aligned towards Bourke, working to make *Safe Smart Strong* Strategy happen.
- **Cross Sector Leadership Group (CSLG)**  
Annual gathering of those supporting Bourke, convened by Maranguka and the Ministerial Champion.



(Sydney Policy Lab, 2021)

## Scale

Maranguka is located in Bourke NSW, a remote town located 800kms northwest of Sydney, situated on the Darling River. The town's location forms part of a traditional boundary area for the Ngemba, Murrawarri, Budjiti and Barkinji Tribal Groups.

In the 2016 census:

- 2,634 people lived in Bourke
- 31.5% of the population was Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 8.4% of the population was aged 0-4 years
- 8.4% aged 5-9 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census Bourke (A)).

## Costs – investment and resourcing

- Maranguka is funded through multiple sources including state and local government and philanthropic partners, including in-kind support from any government agencies and not for profits.
- Substantive multiyear philanthropic funding support for Maranguka began in 2014.
- In 2019, Maranguka secured multiyear Federal and NSW Government support through the Stronger Places Stronger People program, a bilateral agreement which across 2019- 2024 will invest \$1.5million from the Commonwealth plus an additional \$360,000 for capacity building.
- This has been matched by \$1.58million over the five years plus in-kind support from the NSW Government. (Sydney Policy Lab, 2021).

### Costings for the Maranguka Justice Reinvest Project: (KPMG Consulting, 2018a)

- 2012 to 2015 Project set up phase: \$554,800

- 2016 to 2017: \$561,000 including core team salaries of \$393,000 plus additional project resources, consultancies and facilitation fees of \$168,000.

## Key actors

<b>1. Burke Tribal Council and Maranguka</b>
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
What was their level of <b>Capability to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>

<b>2. State and Federal Government</b>
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
What was their level of <b>capability to act</b> on this leverage point? <b>Low <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/>

## Evidence of outcomes/impact

Maranguka has been the subject of independent evaluation, as well as ongoing impact evaluation through the Safe Smart Strong Evaluation Framework.

A 2018 Impact evaluation of Maranguka by KPMG indicated:

- 38 per cent reduction in charges across the top five juvenile offence categories
- 14 per cent reduction in bail breaches
- 42 per cent reduction in days spent in custody
- 23 per cent reduction in police recorded incidence of domestic violence and comparable drops in rates of reoffending
- 31 per cent increase in year 12 student retention rates (KPMG Consulting, 2018a).

As part of its community data approach, Maranguka also compiles community report cards, providing accessible information to the community (Maranguka, 2023b). For example, one of the key community indicators 2022 showed 100% of babies born in Bourke in 2022 were born healthy.

- A case study focused on the benefits of the cross-sector collaboration, including the CSLG and CSLE concluded that shared leadership groupings of Government, NGOs and community these groups were an important means of connection between Tribal council and Government are vital to the success of community aspirations (Sydney Policy Lab, 2021).
- KMPG estimated that in 2016 the financial return on investment was significant. From investment of \$600,000 in operational costs, the savings of future avoided costs (money that won't have to be spent later) was around \$3.1million. This represents a return of five times the investment (KPMG Consulting, 2018b).



## Insights from implementation

### Implementation approach:

- Place-based, collective impact initiative - with Maranguka Community Hub being the 'backbone' team
- Justice Reinvestment Initiative
- First Nation's led self-determination
- Cultural governance model
- Cross-sector commitment.

## Key learnings from implementation

In the case study of the Maranguka Community Hub and the governance approach, four clear themes emerged:

- **Clear Community Leadership:** The Bourke Tribal Council's 'Safe, Smart and Strong strategy' clearly outlines what the group is working towards with a clear framework of cultural authority and self-determination.
- **Willingness by all parties to build deep collaboration and listening.**
- **Two-way accountability:** The Bourke Tribal Council is responsible for strategy setting whilst the community hub has responsibility of collaboration and conversation. Government and NGOs are responsible for supporting and resource alignment towards desired community outcomes.
- **Authority and Authorising Environment:** Bourke Tribal Council had preeminent authority whilst Government employees had the required Authorisation (Sydney Policy Lab, 2021).

## Enablers for success

A number of enabling conditions have been identified (Sydney Policy Lab, 2021):

- **A consistent Ministerial champion:** for continuity of authorisation and increased political support.
- **Establishment of the Maranguka Principles:** These are agreed ways of working to be embedded in all service contracts, ensuring cultural authority and leadership of the Bourke tribal council is recognised and all organisations are aligned to the outcomes of the Safe, Smart, Strong strategy.
- **Holding meetings in person:** the Bourke Tribal Council has insisted that the CSLG meet in Bourke whenever possible, and the CSLE aims to hold one of its quarterly meetings in Bourke. For government and non-government organisations, travelling to Bourke is an important sign of respect for the community's leadership and the Cultural Authority of the Bourke Tribal Council.
- **Establishment of a CSLE that is bilateral:** The CSLE was developed to include all stakeholders, government and non-government, aligning resources towards Bourke. Membership includes Bourke Tribal Council and Maranguka, Federal and State Government and NGOs such as Dusseldorf Forum and Just Reinvest NSW.



## FOUR FACTORS OF SUCCESS



## Barriers to success

- Previous history: 'Aboriginal people have retreated because they've been let down time after time over the last 229 years or broken promises' (Festival of Change, 2017).
- Changes in personnel, including those who were instrumental in the establishment moving on.
- The CSLG are all committed to working this way, however broader networks may remain hierarchical and inflexible. To shift this requires systems change.
- Time, resourcing and willingness of all agencies to fully engage.
- Been lots of hard work and time to build the enabling conditions of goodwill and relationships, and the formal documents and a shared understanding. Now need to focus further on the ground implementation.

## Risks and unintended consequences

- Changes in key personnel, including those who were instrumental in the establishment, moving on
- Changes to levels of commitment by key authorising players.
- Need to consistently work hard to maintain the trust with community.
- Frustration at timeframes for change.

## Sources of formal evidence

### Level of evidence

The available evidence	
Has the program been formally evaluated? <b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Overall Level of Evidence      Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
What evidence was available to compile this case study?	
<u>Informal Data</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Interview for the purpose of this project <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-existing interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Anecdotes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Case studies and quotes from existing literature</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop Participant Insights <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Websites</b>	<u>Formal Data</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Grey Literature</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Academic papers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Evaluation Reports</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Other: both Formal and Informal

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# LEVERAGE POINT 5 – Amplify family and community voices as partners in program design and delivery

## SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

### Leverage point description

**Amplifying family and community voices as partners in program design and delivery** is focused on making it standard practice to have families and communities as part of the design of services and programs (including partnerships between community and government and funded services) so that the services and programs delivered are responsive to the specific needs of families and communities.

We emphasise that this leverage point is specifically focused on increasing the **involvement of families and communities in the** development of **programs delivered by the service system**, which is only one element of ‘early years system’. Other leverage points go to amplifying the voices of children, families and communities in the broader early years system.

### Why could this leverage point be transformational for the early years?

Genuine community engagement in the design and delivery of programs, implemented through place-based initiatives, has a high potential to transform the way families and children (particularly those facing multiple challenges and disadvantage) engage with and experience of early years services.

Co-creation of programs that respond to local needs and address barriers to participation and engagement, has the potential to transform early years outcomes, through increased engagement, participation and early intervention. While it would take substantive shifts in mindsets and practices on the part of governments as commissioning and funding bodies and of services to work in partnership with families and communities, recognising them as experts in their own lives (that they know what they need and how they need it delivered), harnessing this expertise has transformative potential across the early years system.

### Where we focused our evidence gathering

We sought to explore the evidence about benefits of increased involvement of service users, particularly families and communities, in the design and delivery of programs and services directed to them. We found broad evidence about consumer involvement in product and service design across many sectors. However, given our early years focus, we particularly sought to explore the evidence around the benefits of ‘community engagement’ as articulated by Moore, McDonald, McHugh-Dillon and West (2016):

*Community engagement is a process whereby a service system:*

- *proactively seeks out community values, concerns and aspirations*
- *incorporates those values, concerns and aspirations into a decision-making process or processes, and*

- *establishes an ongoing partnership with the community to ensure that the community's priorities and values continue to shape services and the service system*

and the use of place-based initiatives as the implementation approach.

## Key findings

This leverage point was ranked number **12** out of the 18 leverage points. As an individual leverage point this was considered to have medium potential for transformational impact and medium likelihood of success. As this leverage point is focused on reforming ways that the service system works with families and communities - which can be powerful at a micro and meso level, it does not go to the deep systemic challenges, like the top 5 Leverage Points. However, implementation of this leverage point could happen in a relatively short time frame, as it was regarded as feasible, relatively low cost and does not require complex structural change, nor does it challenge the system at a deep level. Given that it is already standard practice in other sectors, there are existing models to replicate.

As most place-based initiatives are focused on improving the responsiveness of the local service system, as a way of addressing the multi-layered challenges of disadvantage (Moore et al 2016), it's not surprising that place-based approaches are a key model for implementation.

There are varying perspectives about the efficacy and impact of place-based approaches on early years outcomes, due in part to the challenges in evaluating place-based initiatives, where outcomes are so interrelated it is difficult to attribute causality to any one activity or intervention. However, there is wide acceptance that greater degrees of community engagement and capacity are beneficial across many social determinants and can have a positive impact on children's outcomes through increased parental engagement with services (Moore et al 2016).

The evidence had many practical insights for implementation, across a range of models for engaging community and families as partners in program design and delivery.

## Linkages to the other leverage points

This leverage point is closely linked to other leverage points in this Cluster, and its impact would be amplified by implementation with:

- LP2 - Fit for purpose funding and commissioning approaches
- LP4 - Feedback loops from community to government and service providers
- LP6 - Recognise families and those with lived experience as experts
- LP11 - Reform the culture of measurement and evaluation

Amplifying family and community voices as partners in program design and delivery, may be a result of implementation of *LP4 - Feedback loops from community to government and service providers* and would be another avenue for activating *LP6 - Recognise families and those with lived experience as experts*, at a local level. The potential Impact of this leverage point would be significantly increased by implementation of *LP2 - Fit for purpose funding and commissioning approaches*, that would enable families and community to be active participants in program design and delivery.

Implementation of *LP11 - Reforming the culture of measurement and evaluation* could be an enabler or be enabled by implementation of this leverage point, (particularly in conjunction with those discussed above), as having families and communities involved in program design would also include the design of evaluation frameworks and outcomes.

# FINDINGS FROM THE CONVERGENT EVIDENCE

## The rankings

CRITERIA	RATING/RANKING
Overall Ranking (1-18)	12
Level of <b>potential impact</b> if leverage point implemented	Medium
<b>Likelihood</b> of successful implementation in the Australian context	Medium
<b>Level of system</b> intervention/change	Micro and Meso level (Individual and community level change)
<b>Likely timeframe</b> for change	5-10 years

## Expert advisory panel perspectives

This leverage point was ranked equal **9th,10th,11th**, by the Expert Advisory Panel. As with all the other leverage points in this cluster, the Panel were clear that the potential for transformational potential of this individual leverage point would be increased if implemented in conjunction with others.

Panel members shared their experiences with engaging families and communities in program design and delivery and were positive about the benefits at both the micro and meso levels. They shared examples of positive outcomes with individual families and within communities, of a partnering approach. However, the Panel also expressed doubts about how broadly this type of approach would be adopted, unless there were significant changes to funding and commissioning and measurement and evaluation, that would enable and incentivise working differently (*see LP-2 and LP-11*).

## Field and family survey rankings

This leverage point was ranked **11th** in the field and family survey, with 65% viewing it as having high potential for impact. This is relatively high ranking given that this leverage point is specifically focused on program design and delivery. This suggests strong support for genuinely engaging families and communities as partners, particularly considering this group rated of *LP6 - Recognising families and those with lived experience as 'experts' for the purposes of evidence, policy and decision-making* 7<sup>th</sup>.

## First Nations perspectives

Our First Nations contributors confirmed the value of partnering with families and communities in program design and delivery, highlighting the importance of community-led services, delivered through ACCOs or other First Nations led organisations, for First Nations engagement with services. Creating culturally safe spaces, building relationships and trust, designing programs that respond to specific needs and facilitating access to integrated services, go a long way to encouraging families to get the support they need.

*"A family might come in to seek one of those outreach services, it might be family support, or a Dad's program, or an Elders program and so straightaway, you've got engagement from community members that are vulnerable, that potentially aren't accessing any other supports, so it's a bit of a pathway. And Aunt or Nan or Uncle might go home and say hey, listen, there's you know, childcare, they run in there we should think about getting the little ones in and I know mob that's running it. It opens up the door for community members feeling safe coming into a program, and then they feel safe going back to their mob and saying this might be really good for our family."*

The Children's Ground approach to early learning is an outstanding example of *amplifying family and community voices in program design and delivery* and the positive impacts for encouraging families and community to engage.

*"Children's Ground is led by families and children. We do it differently, we teach children in culturally appropriate ways, making sure the next generation of kids are getting educated in both ways. Mums, Dads and families are involved, we are grass roots, led from the bottom. Families choose to come to Children's Ground rather than mainstream preschool or childcare, because it is in language, culturally safe and delivered by family/community. Families are key to our model."*

*"But what we're trying to achieve in terms of the systems change, is local First Nations employment and service delivery."*

We also heard about the need for greater engagement with families and community in the design of mainstream programs, so that children are given the best possible development opportunities.

*"Families are their jarjums first teachers. We need to learn from them and incorporate relevant home, community/cultural learnings into everyday practice, so that jarjum's learning is consistent across the circles they move in, to thrive authentically in their learning & development."*

*"We know what works for our jarjums, we need more opportunities to articulate it, we know what they need and can articulate it but don't get the opportunity."*

## Findings from the formal evidence scan

There are various models and methods for 'community engagement' that amplify family and community voices as partners in program design and delivery. Place-based approaches, community development, co-design and co-production and Family Centred Practice, Community Centred practice, or in many cases a combination of elements from all of these approaches (Moore et al 2016).

Working with families and communities in new ways requires commitment from across the system, including funders and service providers to do things differently. Enabling conditions like long-term investment, time and resources for building relationships and connection and flexibility to respond to changing community needs, are key to sustained success.

While there is growing support for adoption of genuine 'community engagement' approaches through place-based initiatives there is deeply embedded resistance within the system, that has yet to be addressed at a systemic level:

- Strong resistance from the systemic structural elements of government administration and funding and commissioning practices.
- Budgets follow siloes and there is very little flexibility in funding and commissioning arrangements, so the structural capacity to include community and families as partners in program design and

delivery is extremely limited. *See Leverage Points 2 & 3 for exploration of shifts to funding and commissioning and funding flows to respond to community priorities.*

- Strong resistance within the system to maintain the status of ‘professionals’ as experts (Moore et al 2016). *See Leverage Point 6 for more about recognising different types of expertise.*
- By keeping place-based initiatives outside mainstream policy design and mainstream funding streams, evidence of positive outcomes can be dismissed as anomalies and exceptions, and the status quo is protected. We explore a notable exception *in the accompanying Case Study 5 - The Tasmanian Child Family Learning Centres.*

## Evidence from within the early years

### Improving early years outcomes:

- Amplifying family and community voices as partners in program design and delivery – through genuine community engagement informing place-based initiatives can improve outcomes for families and children, as the service system becomes more responsive, which in turn encourages increased engagement and participation.
- Positive impacts on early years outcomes come through greater parent/carer and child engagement with local services and supports, creating opportunities for early identification and early intervention, and improved likelihood of participation in programs and access of services (Moore T.P 2021).

### Place-based approaches:

- Australia is part of an international trend in the proliferation of place-based responses to address poor early childhood development outcomes, with notable early international examples like Sure Start, Toronto First Duty, 2Gen Partnerships in USA, and the Harlem Children’s Zone.
- Place-based implementation approaches range from collective impact, partnerships between government and not for profits in specific communities, community led and governed initiatives, to local alliances between government agencies, service providers and community.
- However, there are common goals across approaches - including flexible service delivery approaches to respond to community need and local autonomy where the local community is consulted and actively involved in decision making (Moore T et al 2014).
- The degree of ‘engagement’ and partnership with families and community, differs across place-based initiatives as does the service system’s capacity to respond meaningfully to families and community perspectives and to incorporate these into program design and delivery.
- A number of the case studies featured in these reports showcase place-based initiatives in Australia – including LP17 -Children’s Ground, LP-11Hands up Mallee, LP-4 Child & Family Learning Centres Tas LP-2&3 Greater Shepparton Lighthouse, LP-8 By Five.

## Evidence from other sectors

### Place-based approaches:

- Place-based approaches are increasingly supported in First Nations communities, as they offer opportunities for establishing cultural safety and responsiveness, self-determination and often build on the strength of existing cultural governance structures and community structures, examples include Empowered Communities, Maranguka, Children’s Ground.



- Place-based responses are employed by a variety of sectors to facilitate program and service delivery – from health, mental health services, disaster response and recovery, community legal services and energy transition.

**Commercial and other sectors:**

- In the world of consumer products and services – consumers are regularly involved in the design/development and testing of new products/services to enhance their competitiveness and increase demand. Consumer product development is standard practice, where consumer engagement is recognised as a crucial element of the design process (Trishler et al 2018), (Oertzen A et al 2022).
- Within IT system development – Subject Matter Experts (those who know and use the systems) are engaged throughout the development process to inform system design and to ensure that the system is fit for purpose (Trishler et al 2018).
- There has been a growing focus on the inclusion of Lived Experience expertise in the health and mental health systems over the past decade, supported by growing evidence of improved outcomes where service users (or consumers) have greater agency and voice in their own treatment planning (DHHS 2019).
- There is also evidence of positive outcomes from the inclusion of community voices in the planning of local health services (Warshaw R 2020).

# INSIGHTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

## Key enabling conditions

### **Genuine, shared commitment:**

- A base level of community support and buy-in.
- A *Coalition of the Willing* - commitment by all parties to work together, differently.
- Shared understanding of the problem aiming to solve.
- Recognition by all parties of a need to use new approaches.

### **Authorisation and resourcing:**

- Commitment and authorisation from decision makers to do things differently.
- Government support at all levels for a local response.
- Long term commitment and resourcing.

### **Respect, recognition and trust:**

- Willingness and capacity to recognise the expertise and knowledge of families and communities about their own lives and community.
- Ongoing focus on building and maintaining trust with individuals and the wider community (Moore et al (2014), Moore T.P (2021), Hopwood N (2018)).

## Key barriers to implementation

### **Failing to invest in and support new ways of working:**

- Lack of community readiness and genuinely representative 'community voices'.
- Insufficient resourcing for dedicated community engagement (backbone team or implementation team).
- Not taking the time to develop a 'shared understanding', but rather relying on a collection of individual views.
- Failing to adequately manage the expectations of all parties about the speed and significance of change.
- Failing to establish effective and sustainable governance arrangements that will support the collective work for the long term.

### **Failure to address systemic barriers:**

- Unwillingness or inability of service providers to change their professional practice and performance measures to work more effectively with communities.
- Other systemic barriers, including system siloes, competing KPIs, lack of time to do the relational work required, not enough suitably qualified staff (Hopwood N (2018), Taylor C.L et al (2015) TACSI (2019), Pritchard P et al (2016)).
- Resistance to centring design processes around service users and continuing to place 'the experts' at the centre of design processes (Trischler et al 2019). *See Leverage Point 6 for more about valuing different types of expertise and evidence.*

## Key risks and unintended consequences

### **Increased demand and complexity:**

- Increased demand for services and services unable to respond in a timely way.
- Increased complexity of presenting issues as trust grows and community members seek out support, requiring more skilled staff and more time to provide support.
- More empowered and capable communities may become more demanding and more vocal about their needs and demand more services.

### **Unreasonable expectations of those with lived experience:**

- Risk of unbalanced 'partnerships' where those with lived experience are expected to 'fix' policy failures or poor program design.

### **Domino effect:**

- Changes to program design and delivery in some parts of the early years system – may create demand for similar changes across all parts of the ECD system.

### **Regarded as an exception:**

- As most place-based initiatives are driven from outside of 'the system' there is a significant risk that positive outcomes are dismissed as exceptions or outliers.
- Without the benefits of mainstream funding and resourcing, rigorous evaluation and processes to capture learnings are often not funded, reducing the capacity to share the learnings or translate the approaches, for adoption in other communities.

# Case Study 5 -Tasmanian Child And Family Learning Centres

## Why did we choose this case study?

The Tasmanian CFLCs were chosen, as it is a rare example of a long-term, sustained, place-based approach that has been scaled in multiple communities, with ongoing government involvement and funding and has a specific focus on valuing community and families as partners in all aspects of the design and operation. The CFLCs have some unique characteristics in the Australian context, and the approach has been well documented and evaluated, offering valuable insights for implementation.

## The initiative

The CFLCs is a place-based, collaborative early childhood initiative for families and their young children, currently operating in 13 disadvantaged communities in Tasmania. Through the establishment of local, integrated community hubs, CFLCs aim to support the health, wellbeing and lifelong learning of children and help families build connection and belonging in their local community (DECYP 2023).

The CFLCs are funded and delivered by the Tasmanian government (DECYP) and are a core element of the government's early years approach, with long-term commitment and funding. Commencing with the establishment of 12 CFLCs, the government committed to establishing another six, taking the total to 18. There are 13 operating and five more due to open in 2025.

Establishment of the CFLCs was the result of a collaboration between the Tasmanian government and the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation after the government publicly acknowledged they needed to change the way services were delivered to children and families, to improve early childhood outcomes. And the government was willing to commit to long-term investment and the necessary resources to do it.

The design of the CFLCs was considered, evidence based and innovative for government, particularly the specific focus on ensuring community and families are valued as partners in all aspects of the design and operation of the CFLC (McDonald M et al 2015).

From the outset, CFLCs sought to change the way services were delivered to children and families. This included a focus on more integrated service delivery, as well as involving families and community members in decision making and governance (or 'genuine family engagement').

The CFLCs were seeking to achieve specific outcomes around:

- accessing services and support
- promoting children's development, wellbeing and readiness for school
- enhancing parent-child relationships
- fostering parent growth
- changing family circumstances
- strengthening communities (Hopwood N 2018).

The involvement of government has enabled the scaling across 12 sites was also reflective of government's authority and agency to create the enabling conditions for change (Prichard P et al 2015, McDonald M et al 2015).

## Scale

Statewide initiative in Tasmania. Currently there are 13 CFLCs operating in Tasmania servicing up to 35,000 people, with an additional five centres to be opened by 2025.

State-wide approach to implementing a place-based model in 18 local communities (including urban, regional and rural communities), by 2025.

## Costs – investment and resourcing

### \$1.1m per centre per year

\$91m – first 12 CFLCs = \$1.1m per centre/ per year

\$28m over 4 years for the additional 6 new CFLCs

(treasury.tas.gov.au)

**\$1million** - Learning & Development and Implementation Support (Prichard P et al 2015)

## Key actors

<b>1. Tasmanian Government</b>
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
What was their level of <b>Capability to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b> High <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2. Tasmanian Early Years Foundation (TEYF)</b>
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
What was their level of <b>Capability to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b> High <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3. Centre for Child Community Health (CCCH) - Murdoch Children's Research Institute</b>
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b> High <input type="checkbox"/>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b> High <input type="checkbox"/>
What was their level of <b>Capability to act</b> on this leverage point? Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>

## Evidence of outcomes/impact

- The CFLCs demonstrate the potential positive impacts of engaging and empowering families and communities, as a means to improving engagement and access to early support services, and the flow on effects for improved ECD outcomes (Hopwood N 2018, Moore T.G 2021).
- The impact and outcomes of the CFLCs has been independently evaluated on multiple occasions consistently demonstrating value for children and families (Taylor C.L et al 2015, 2017), (Hopwood N 2018).
- In 2017, local families and community held 50% of the positions on the local governance of the CFLC, there are 'Working Together Agreements' co-designed and agreed by families, community members and services at the CFLC (Taylor C. L et al 2017).

- Parents co-facilitate programs such as the Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) program, offering peer-to-peer expertise and support (Prichard P et al 2015).

The CFLCs have achieved consistently positive outcomes across a range of indicators:

- Parents identified Centres as informal, accessible, responsive, flexible, neutral, non-judgemental and supportive places where people felt valued, respected and safe. Parents said that these qualities made the critical difference to their engagement and positive experiences of services and supports in Centres, in contrast to some of their experiences in the past (CL Taylor et al 2017).
- Centre users judged their experiences of services and supports more positively than non-users on fundamental elements of place-based initiatives (joined-up working, capacity building, and flexible delivery) as well as best practice principles from Australia's EYLF – secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships, partnerships, equity and respect for diversity (Hopwood N 2018).

## Insights from implementation

### Implementation approach:

- Place-based, integrated community hubs.
- Enabling policy approaches – creating conditions of possibility.
- Place-based approach.
- Co-designed approaches with local community.
- Partnering with families and community.
- Each centre is funded for the equivalent of four FTE staff including a centre leader, community inclusion worker, centre assistant and an education officer.
- Long term commitment by government.

## Key learnings from implementation

- The integrated, place-based approach is necessary, but not sufficient - other conditions are necessary.
- Time and authority for CFLC staff to do high value-add, multi-purpose and above ordinary informal work, is vital.
- The continual embedding of the Family Partnership Model offers a structure and shared method for the ongoing development of positive ways of working between services and families and with communities.
- The capability building of community members to partner in governance, program design and especially in program delivery demonstrates the value of long-term investment, commitment and strengths-based approaches (McDonald M et al 2015, Prichard P et al 2015, Moore T.G 2021).

## Enablers for success

- The choice of CFLC locations was dependent upon community support for the concept (Hopwood N 2018, Taylor C.I et al 2017).
- Long term bi-partisan commitment from government.
- Reform driven from within the government system, working with those outside of government.
- Authorising environment giving permission for testing and trying.
- Engagement of expertise to support design and implementation.
- Strong community support – a key criteria for site / community selection.
- Genuine commitment to doing things differently by all parties.

- Purpose built centres designed (Hopwood N 2018) (SVA 2023).

## Barriers to success

- Tension between traditional government project management timelines and community pace).
- Slow building of community trust and engagement in some communities.
- Initial uncertainty / fear of change in ways of working.
- Finding mutually suitable impact measurement and evaluation.
- The natural attrition of key personnel.
- Balancing tight and loose implementation.
- Maintaining an authorising environment across government departments (SVA 2023).

## Risks and unintended consequences

- Increased demand for services and subsequent pressure on CFLC staff and staff burnout.
- Growth in numbers of families engaged in activities, required flexibility and adaptations to maintain the responsiveness of programs (Taylor C.L et al 2015 and 2017, Hopwood N 2018).
- The project design recognised key capability gaps and made provision to address these.
- The intervention was carefully designed and implemented, in part to mitigate a critical risk that if the centres didn't meet local communities' needs, they would not be used. (Moore et al 2016).

## Sources of formal evidence

### Level of evidence

The available evidence	
Has the program been formally evaluated? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Overall Level of Evidence: Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
What evidence was available to compile this case study?	
<u>Informal Data</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interview for the purpose of this project <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-existing interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Anecdotes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Case studies and quotes from existing literature <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Workshop Participant Insights <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Websites	<u>Formal Data</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grey Literature <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Academic papers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evaluation Reports <input type="checkbox"/> Other: both Formal and Informal

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# LEVERAGE POINT 6 – Recognise families and those with lived experience as ‘experts’ for the purposes of evidence, policy and decision making

## SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

### Leverage point description

**Recognise families and those with lived experience as ‘experts’ for the purposes of evidence, policy and decision making** is about making sure that the real-life experience of families is heard and respected (and given as much weight as formal ‘experts’) when decisions are being made about policy, funding and programs, and that these perspectives are reflected in final decisions.

### Why could this leverage point be transformational for the early years?

Viewing people with ‘lived experience’ as experts represents a paradigm shift based on co-design and power sharing. Applied as an overarching principle, it has the potential to substantially shift the design and delivery of policies and services by creating services and a service system that are designed with and for users, rather than many existing systems, that may have been designed around funding models and organisational need.

Genuine community engagement/participation in the design and delivery of programs, which are then implemented through collaboration with those with lived experience, will potentially create a system that is more palatable, acceptable and responsive for community members.

### Where we focused our evidence gathering

Though we started with early childhood research, it was difficult to find examples of lived experience expertise being recognised in early childhood development policy design, especially at the state or federal government level. We have therefore incorporated relevant examples from other sectors, where this area is further progressed, such as in the mental health space.

### Key findings

This leverage point was ranked number **7** out of 18. Recognising families and those with lived experience as ‘experts’ for the purposes of evidence, policy and decision making, could ultimately influence how we consider policy, services and outcomes for children and families. Implementing this leverage point may influence a fundamental mindset shift, shifts in resource and power redistribution and support implementation of other leverage points.

Although large scale policy and systems change is likely to be a long term, high-cost exercise, this leverage point can also be utilised at a micro level, at relatively low cost in the Australian context, making implementation feasible. Strong examples of this exist in the mental health space, where lived experience experts are present at the table for policy and decision making at all levels. Research shows

lived experience engagement can lead to increased participation and more effective and equitable service delivery. Considered in the context of early childhood, this may in turn lead to improved population outcomes for children and their families.

Many evaluations of place-based or co-produced initiatives show emerging positive outcomes at the local or community-level rather than institutional or governmental levels. *For more exploration of place-based initiatives, and accompanying case studies see Leverage Points 2, 3, 4, 11 and 17.*

In the early childhood sector, the Working Together for Three Year Olds (WT3) Pilot saw local children, families and service partners leading the development of tailored care and wraparound supports as opposed to applying a standard model of care. The initiative saw positive early signs of shifting mindsets towards viewing families, children, and providers as ‘experts’ who play an important and ongoing role in influencing policy decision-making.

## Linkages to the other leverage points

This leverage point has the potential to influence many of the leverage points in **Cluster 3 ‘Shared accountability for children's outcomes’**, as well as being a key enabler for the rest of the leverage points in this Cluster:

- LP1 - Grant greater decision-making power to the local community level
- LP2 - Fit-for-purpose funding and commissioning approaches
- LP3 - Redirect funding flows to support local priorities and responses
- LP4 - Feedback loops from families and communities to government and service providers
- LP5 - Amplify family and community voices as partners in program design and delivery
- LP10 - Recognise the voice of children in policy and program design.

# FINDINGS FROM THE CONVERGENT EVIDENCE

## The rankings

CRITERIA	RATING/RANKING
Overall Ranking (1-18)	7
Level of <b>potential impact</b> if leverage point implemented	Medium
<b>Likelihood</b> of successful implementation in the Australian context	High
<b>Level of system</b> intervention/change	Micro and Macro level (Individual and society, cultural or regime change)
<b>Likely timeframe</b> for change	5-10 years

## Expert advisory panel perspectives

This was ranked by the Expert Advisory Panel, ranking it equal **12/13th** overall. Though the Panel felt it had high potential for impact, they expressed concern about the desirability of this leverage point for key stakeholders across the system - e.g. government and service providers. Though they identified this leverage point as an important component of **Cluster 1 'Children and families in the driver's seat'** they felt that individually it was not as transformational as others in the cluster.

Concerns were also expressed around:

- ensuring all voices are heard, not just the louder or more educated voices
- balancing parental expertise with expertise from within the system, as families may not be aware what services, programs exist
- return on investment and cost as if fully enacted, this could change how service is provided.

## Field and family survey rankings

This leverage point was ranked equal 14-15th in the field and family survey, with 65% viewing it as having high potential for impact.

## First Nations perspectives

Respecting communities and families as experts in their own lives is seen as fundamental to Improving outcomes for First Nations families and communities. We heard from our First Nations contributors about approaches like that at Children's Ground where families and communities are valued for their expertise. And we heard examples where the mainstream system needs to do better.

*"We know what works for our jarjums. We need more opportunities to articulate it. We know what they need and can articulate it, but we don't get the opportunity."*

*"The message gets lost by the time it gets back up to the decision makers. They don't have the cultural lens to interpret what they are hearing – and without the lived experience of going between both worlds they can't deliver the authentic message."*

## Findings from the formal evidence scan

Defining 'lived experience' is complex. Literature in this area does not have a shared definition of consumer or lived experience leadership and that roles differ across contexts.

- A person with lived experience is generally understood to be a person who has lived (or is currently living) with the issues the community (or a particular organisation) is focused on and who may be able to offer some insight into the system as it is experienced by consumers.
  - This form of expertise does not come from training or formal education but rather personal knowledge or direct exposure to or involvement with a system, process, or service.
  - Given this experience, people with lived experience have an awareness of what does or does not work for them as a consumer.
- It is important to realise people are multidimensional – who they are is not defined by their lived experience of one topic-area or service. They may have experience that expands beyond the topic of interest that could also be valuable.

## Evidence from within the early years

- Interviews conducted with 35 Australian early childhood education decision-makers indicate some improvement in the level of community consultation and engagement, with some leaders in this space suggesting taking a 'child-centric' view and building the capacity of families as key drivers to improving the early childcare system in future (McKenzie 2014).
- The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare conducted a Lived Experience Design Project to bring together a group of expert birth parents with lived experience of child protection to design policy and reform solutions across early help, family group conferencing and child protection learning and development. As part of this work, the Voice of Parents project profiled nine birth parents with lived experience of the child protection system. The project, funded by philanthropy enabled the Centre to lead developing, testing and refining lived experience prototypes inclusive of a remuneration package. The Voice of Parents project provided strong foundations and an evidence-base to expand our parent participation model to form an enhanced lived experience design group currently consists of six diverse parent designers focusing on reform projects currently funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (CECFW 2023).
- Overall, the literature suggests that involving lived experience experts in early childhood programs and initiatives can lead to more effective and equitable service delivery for young children and their families. However, there is a lack strong evidence of a direct link between engaging people in design and effective outcomes (CECFW,2023).

## Evidence from other sectors

- Viewing people with 'lived experience' as experts represents a paradigm shift from consumer participation towards consumer leadership, a phenomenon occurring across several sectors, particularly public and mental health (Gordon 2005).

- Research evidence highlights the importance of involving users in the design and delivery of services as a way of reforming public services (Bradwell & Marr 2008, Boyle et al.2010, Gannon & Lawson 2008). The research shows that services are more effective, and that people's needs are better met when they are involved in an equal and reciprocal relationship with service professionals and systems.
- Evidence shows that incorporating co-production principles into programmes for people with long-term conditions can help them to gain knowledge, learn skills and adopt behaviours that are thought to be important in achieving better health and wellbeing (SCIE 2023).
- Recognising that mental ill health starts at a young age, TACSI worked with three teams of young people to gather insights and develop the tools to help others do similar work and value the role of young people with lived experience. They identified that an important part of genuine and meaningful engagement of those with lived experience is that power differentials are acknowledged, explored and addressed from the outset. Understanding the diversity of perspectives held by those with lived experience, and providing sufficient time to build relationships and shared understanding are also important (TACSI,2023).
- The Mental Health Complaints Commissioner Victoria has developed a 'Lived Experience Engagement Checklist' to support organisations who are engaging people with lived experience of the mental health care system. The checklist is available online and contains valuable, evidence-based foundations. To value peoples expertise it is important to ensure people with lived experience a fair and reasonable rate for their time (MHCC, 2022).

# INSIGHTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

## Key enabling conditions

### Co-design and co-production:

Co-design, co-production, place-based approaches or peer researchers are common approaches to engaging with people who have lived experience.

Co-production is increasingly used, as a prominent approach to working with people who have lived experience from the outset of public policy design and development. Co-production is when consumers or citizens are involved in, leading, defining the problem, designing, and delivering the solution, and evaluating the outcome, either with professionals or individually.

Co-production requires a high level of participation at multiple stages during the development and delivery of services or initiatives where consumers are deliberate partners in co-planning, co-delivery, and co-evaluation. Enablers of co-production can include (Roper et al. 2018):

- commitment to the process by key people who have power/leverage
- investment in building and maintaining strong relationships with people who have lived experience
- establishing a shared purpose, scope and principles for working together
- allowing sufficient time, particularly for a problem to be explored from different perspectives and well understood by the collective, before solutions can be developed
- clear, transparent, and frequent communication with all stakeholders. This can include checking in with people on an individual level to get feedback on their experience of the process and allow them to share perspectives in their own ways
- developing a shared understanding between participants
- willingness and capacity to recognise the expertise and knowledge of families and communities about their own lives and community.

### Capturing voice:

Amongst community organisations working with people with lived experience of mental illness, a number of key factors have been identified for effectively capturing family voice to recognise those with lived experience as experts (Baxter & Fancourt 2020). The organisation must:

- provide person-centred, empathetic and safe spaces
- offer innovative, creative, and distinctive opportunities for consumers
- witness and understand first-hand the benefits for their participants.

Strong partnerships across the health sector are also an important contributing factor.

## Key barriers to implementation

Key barriers to coproduction include (Roper et al. 2018):

- business as usual processes where the existing business approach does not suit everyone involved in the co-production group
- the project lacks adequate support at the right levels
- lack of commitment to genuine power-sharing that should be sustainable beyond a particular individuals involvement

- fear that this may fail can stop organisations from starting.

In the mental health space, a number of barriers have been identified across settings, including research, treatment and community sector organisations:

- Short-term funding and/or lack of resourcing which can lead to burn out for those delivering the project (Baxter & Fancourt 2020).
- A lack of fit-for-purpose research training in methods and related tasks (lack of capabilities/resources) (Vojtila et al. 2021).
- Requirement for ongoing supervision and management (capacity to support involvement) (Vojtila et al. 2021).
- Tokenistic involvements and power dynamics (e.g., overt domination, suppressing topics, shaping desires, payment) (Vojtila et al. 2021).

## Key risks and unintended consequences

### Individual risk:

One of the primary risks identified is potential harm caused to people with lived experience. There are multiple potential avenues to address:

- People with lived experience may be elevated into roles they do not have the right skillsets for and then not well supported to succeed in those roles Kara (2020).
- Lived experience experts may bring other knowledge and expertise to the table, which has the potential to be discounted (Kara, 2020).
- Lack of a safe space or environment or true power sharing may cause undue stress (Vojtila et al. 2021).

### Systemic risk:

- There may also be an underlying assumption that people with lived experience will always agree and a risk of generalising the views of an individual or group of individuals to a whole group of consumers (Vojtila et al. 2021).
- If the right foundations are not in place, engagement with people who have lived experience may be or appear tokenistic (Vojtila et al. 2021).
- Another interesting component of this debate is disagreement across sectors, services and organisations regarding the level of participation and power sharing required in order to recognise families with lived experience as experts (Vojtila et al. 2021).



# Case Study 6 - Working Together for 3 Year Olds Pilot

## Why did we choose this case study?

The development of this early childhood program is an example of a small pilot encapsulating recognition of the voice of family and those with lived experience as the experts during its development. It has also been expanded statewide following the pilot demonstrating the scaling up of an initiative utilising this methodology.

## The initiative

Working Together for 3-year-olds (WT3) is a targeted pre-school initiative funded by the Tasmanian Government. The WT3 initiative provides eligible three-year-old children experiencing vulnerability with access to government-subsidised pre-school programs to increase participation in quality early learning. With a focus on quality, the program is delivered wherever possible, in education and care services or alternatively, in government schools. The program amounts to 10-15 hours a week (or 400 hours across a year) for each child. The aim of the initiative is to give all children an equal opportunity to access early learning. The WT3 pilot was co-designed with:

- families
- the early learning sector
- community services
- government agencies.

It was piloted in 2019 as Working Together for 3 Year Olds, which saw 55 children enrolled across 10 Tasmanians early learning centres. The purpose of the WT3 pilot was to co-design the initiative with relevant stakeholders; facilitate the delivery of the program with service partners at five locations operating from ten long day care centres across Tasmania; and to learn about, evaluate, and improve aspects of the WT3 model and delivery.

In addition to co-design, service providers also participated in training in the [Family Partnerships Model](#) which provided strategies for reducing separation anxiety and other useful practices to support them to engage well with participating families and children. This professional learning was seen to be an important factor in the success of the pilot (Clear Horizon, 2019).

From March to June 2019, the initiative was piloted in 5 areas operating from **11 early learning centres, with 55 places available** (Clear Horizon, 2019).

## Scale

Location: Tasmania, Australia

- This was a small pilot (targeting 55 placements) that in its second phase was funded for expansion in 2021. It was scaled to include 120 placements for children who meet the eligibility criteria for the initiative (Tasmanian Government 2017).
- The program has now become embedded across Tasmania in the Tasmanian early childhood system by the Tasmanian Department for Education. Children and Young People.

## Costs – investment and resourcing

Public costing information for the pilot was not available, however, the 2020 state-wide roll out of Working Together, saw the program expand to 120 placements in 2020, and a total of 240 in 2021 was estimated to cost approximately 10.5 million.

## Key actors

<b>1. The Department of Education Tasmania (now called the Department for Education, Children and Young People)</b>			
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point?	Low <input type="checkbox"/>	Medium <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point?	Low <input type="checkbox"/>	Medium <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
What was their level of <b>Capability to act</b> on this leverage point?	Low <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>	High <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>2. The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) – Co-design Lead</b>			
What was their <b>level of Agency to act</b> on this leverage point?	Low <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>	High <input type="checkbox"/>
What was their <b>level of Authority to drive adoption</b> of this leverage point?	<b>Low <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>	Medium <input type="checkbox"/>	High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
What was their level of <b>Capability to act</b> on this leverage point?	Low <input type="checkbox"/>	Medium <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>

## Evidence of outcomes/impact

WT3 measured change across a breadth of outcomes:

### Enrolment and attendance:

- 61% of enrolled children are averaging at least 10 hours of ECEC per week, a figure slightly lower than the target of 70%. Evidence also showed that attendance rates were improving over time.

### Relationships:

- Families developed significant relationships during the pilot including with service partners and with others in their wider community. Other relationships identified as improving were:
  - children with their educators and peers
  - families with educators as well as other WT3 families
  - parents/carers with their children (including other children in the family, not participating in WT3)
  - parents/carers with other support services
  - community/system connections – families, service providers and other support services.

### Outcomes for families/parents and carers:

- Some positive feedback was received that parents' wellbeing and attitude towards their child's learning is improving.

### Outcomes for children:

- Children demonstrated improved verbal and non-verbal communication including social competence, speech and the ability to communicate. Children's development and readiness for later education also improved. Service partners and carers specifically mentioned:
  - Social skills and building relationships
  - Physical coordination and self-care, including toilet training

- Numeracy development and skills, such as counting
- Language, improved speech and communication
- Developing independence and emotional maturity.

#### **Broader impact:**

- The independent evaluation was not focussed on measuring whether the co-design process facilitated positive outcome and change for families and children. This makes it difficult to measure the extent to which the co-design process contributed to pilot effectiveness (Clear Horizon, 2019).
- Shifts in mindset were reported to be influenced by the family partnerships model; the 'co-design' approach and introduced practices such as wraparound supports and providing data across partnerships. For example, one service partner self-reported a shift from an educator/expert mindset to a family partnership mindset.
- The pilot also showed early instances of broader system shifts when it comes to the positioning of children and families in policy design and implementation (Clear Horizon, 2019).

## **Insights from implementation**

#### **Co-design:**

- The approach was co-designed with three key stakeholder groups and involved prototyping different aspects of the model and refining it through consultation and co-design.
- A Local Enabling Group (LEG) was established that included families, educators and early years teachers, principals, and representative from local services in the community.
- Prototypes were discussed during each LEG meeting and a number of adaptations were made based on this feedback, meeting the pilot expectations regarding the reflection and adaptation processes for prototypes.
- In total, 13 prototypes were tested including a range of tools, experiences and interactions (Clear Horizon, 2019).

#### **The Family Partnership Model:**

- The [Family Partnership Model \(FPM\)](#) is an evidence-based and internationally recognised approach to partnership practice which aims to achieve better outcomes for children and families. This model was integral to the pilot and ongoing service delivery. The Model demonstrates how specific helper qualities and skills, when used in partnership, enable parents, families and others to overcome their challenges, build strengths, resilience and enable their goals to be achieved effectively.
- The FPM training explores all aspects of the model that support the building of genuine and respectful partnerships towards achieving improved outcomes for children and their families. Training was provided to initiative partners to help educators engage well with families (Tasmanian Department of Education, 2019). *(The FPM was also used at the Tasmania Child and Family Learning Centres -Case Study 5).*

## **Key learnings from implementation**

#### **Practice approach:**

The following elements of the approach were considered most valuable for improving practice:

- Professional learning for service partners in the Family Partnership Model (FPM), co-design and other practices received positive feedback from the majority of service provider respondents.

- The initial, two-day training in the FPM equipped educators with new approaches, tools and techniques to engage with parents/carers.
- Using tools and reflective processes through the prototyping process which service providers reported improved their capacity to deliver support to families and to reflect on their practice.
- Ongoing formal collaborative opportunities (learning circles) has provided an opportunity for networking/collaborating, hearing about different approaches and adapting practice.

#### **The model:**

The core areas of strength and innovation identified in the initiative include:

- capability building provided for service partners
- utilisation of the Family Partnership Model
- no-cost approach
- wraparound supports and transport assistance
- collaborative way of working (Clear Horizon, 2019).

## **Enablers for success**

#### **For children and families:**

- An enabler of improved social competence and communication for children was the time spent at the centres, with educators and peers, in a learning environment with a focus on building social skills.
- Enrolment and engagement with families worked well when there were prior relationships and connections with families to build on.

#### **For service providers:**

- The additional resourcing for providers provided them with time to build relationships and collaborate with other services in the community.
- There was evidence that capacity building and support for service and delivery partners played an enabling role.
- Collaboration between partners around the shared WT3 goals was important, and required open communication, and time and energy invested by all partners to build trust and relationships.

(Source: Clear Horizon, 2019)

## **Barriers to success**

Challenges identified in implementation include:

- increased workload and responsibility for service providers (including administrative burden)
- managing ratios and the extra burden on staff such as when staff are taken off the floor to support WT3 children or families
- the varied level of training key workers have received around the FPM and WT3 purpose made staff time management more difficult
- challenging to identify, reach out to and enrol targeted children, particularly where no prior relationships existed
- access and transport for the families was a dominant and recurring issue.

A number of existing sector wide issues created barriers during this program:

- managing staff burnout, acknowledged by service partners as an ongoing sector-wide issue
- inability to access Commonwealth funding to support children with high behavioural needs
- adequate resourcing for program (to cover marketing; administration; training; back filling; ECTs and support services)
- lack of systems integration between schemes and services both at a state and federal level, and between the two can prevent services from accessing additional support for families the extent of collaboration and alignment between the ECEC sector and related systems and sectors
- staffing, resourcing, and time challenges for service partners (Clear Horizon, 2019).

## Risks and unintended consequences

- The increase to service partner workloads.
- Increased workload without adequate supports and staff burnout could lead to additional turnover in the sector. Extra support for staff is an important element of scalability and further roll-out.
- A positive flow-on effect of the initiative was that FPM related practice becoming adopted by other educators and WT3 approaches influencing business as usual more broadly at the centre (Clear Horizon, 2019).

## Sources of formal evidence

### Level of evidence

The available evidence	
Has the program been formally evaluated? <b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Overall Level of Evidence Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> <b>High</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
What evidence was available to compile this case study?	
<u>Informal Data</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Interview for the purpose of this project <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Pre-existing interviews</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Anecdotes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Case studies and quotes from existing literature</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop Participant Insights <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Websites</b>	<u>Formal Data</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Grey Literature <input type="checkbox"/> Academic papers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evaluation Reports <input type="checkbox"/> Other: both Formal and Informal

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