THE SERVICE DELIVERY DILEMMA

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May, I start today with firstly acknowledging the Bidjigal people as the traditional owners of this land on which this conference is being held, and thank the organisers for providing me with the opportunity to speak today.

My abstract refers to what FaCS sees is “A Service Delivery Dilemma”. Let’s start by acknowledging that the traditional public provision of social welfare at the federal, state and territory levels has now made shifts to engage to a much greater degree, bodies such as NGO’s, private sector and commercial orientated government owned enterprises.

However in doing this we have posed another challenge in that it is harder to distinguish between the lines of responsibility between public sector welfare delivery and that which is passed into the hands of private and NGO sectors.

The devolved environment creates a dilemma for the Commonwealth, which is to have in place a system of service delivery that assures itself and the public, that providers are delivering the intended (and funded) outcomes, and that those outcomes are actually benefiting the community, whilst at the same time, taking into account ways of supporting inclusion or input by disadvantaged groups, and not further marginalising them through policy and programs. Government agencies have a role in delivering a quality service to the public, whilst being accountable for the money spent, having good governance arrangements in place, and taking account of risk management issues.

FaCS recognises that social inclusion incorporates full participation in social, political and economic processes. We recognise that “measuring the balance between exclusion and inclusion is critical. And it requires focusing on the net effects of these two
competing forces. We acknowledge that the public authority has to be proactive, taking initiative to allocate resources to strengthen inclusive practices.

Building more inclusive societies is not solely the responsibility of the public authority, but require the support of the public opinion and society. The private sector therefore, plays an important role as a conduit between government and the community.

Input and feedback by the community into FaCS’s policies and programs is very important issue, it is the through input and feedback that we, as a department keep in touch with the needs of the community. We strive to meet the needs of the community, through building relationships, with the private sector, other government agencies and the community.

FaCS has set the scene for 2003-2004 through the development of the Priorities Statement:

- Investing in Children and Strengthening Families
- Participation
- Implementation and Service Delivery
- Financial Integrity
- People
- Knowledge
Four years on from the FaCS formation, we have a clear message from the Government that their social welfare agenda requires effective, high quality policies and a whole-of-government approach to development them.

This requires us to foster and draw on relationships and partnerships with other portfolios, other levels of government and the community and business sectors.

Our main focus is to strengthen communities, encourage and support individuals and families, so they can participate more in Australia’s economic and community life. Building and maintaining good relationships with key stakeholders, the community and other government agencies is an imperative part of FaCS continuing to have successful outcomes for the community.

**FaCS ‘SYSTEMS’ OF SERVICE DELIVERY**

FaCS has a range of relationships or ‘systems of service delivery’ with service providers that contribute to developing and delivering government programs and services. Centrelink is the largest service provider, as the principal gateway for delivery of the income support and participation elements of the social support system, however FaCS itself is BIG on service delivery and engaging non-government organisations.

FaCS funds around $730 million in funding to almost 15,000 community services covering child care, youth, disability, family and emergency relief programs. FaCS provides almost $3.8 million to 20 peak bodies representing community services, homelessness, welfare, disabilities, children’s services and family relationships and has many advisory bodies that provide advice to government to assist in formulating policy initiatives.

Management of these service delivery relationships is crucial to FaCS. The 2003-04 FaCS Priorities plan identifies service delivery as a key issue to be addressed by all staff within the department. It acknowledges the need to focus on better understanding
how FaCS-funded services contribute to the broader social support system and in consultation with communities draw on lessons learnt to improve FaCS service delivery policies and practices.

FaCS understands that ‘one-size fits all approaches’ are no longer acceptable. FaCS has 15,000+ unique relationships and often wears different ‘hats’ for different purposes. The type of relationship with any one organisation at any given time depends on what the situation requires and what is the most appropriate way to achieve the desired outcome.

As each FaCS’s relationships is selected to suit a purpose there is a wide continuum of service delivery possibilities from the simplest purchaser/provider model to the more complex and sophisticated alliance arrangements. The management of a particular program drives these arrangements: arms length, negotiation and partnership. Of course, these relationships should be dynamic and may change as they develop and evolve and/or as the environment changes.

‘Arms length’ systems focus on the obligations set out in the contractual agreement between the parties. An arms length partnership is established when there is a mature market with an established program. It has easily measured outcomes, strong quality assurance and standards, including performance reporting regimes, and has a competitive selection based on well-understood criteria. A current example of this relationship has been established with the development of case based funding for FaCS Disability Employment service providers. Case based funding is a fee for service arrangement where fees are paid to providers to assists job seekers with disabilities to find and keep employment and the fees are based on the job seekers’ support needs and their employment outcomes.

The ‘negotiation’ service delivery system is used when outcomes and circumstances are more complex or less clearly defined. Outputs are hard to define so to be prescriptive in contractual specification may limit the ability of providers to respond flexibly and innovatively. The Personal Support Programme and the Northern Territory JET Child Care crèches are prime examples of a negotiation type service delivery arrangement as there is no single solution for all participants.
Personal Support Programme was announced as part of the Australians Working Together package in the 2001-02 Budget. It replaced the Community Support Programme and focuses on the most disadvantaged in the community – those vulnerable to social isolation from facing homelessness, drug and alcohol problems, psychological disorders, domestic violence and financial management problems. The Personal Support Programme service delivery model entails Centrelink referring customers experiencing these multiple non-vocational barriers to a service provider funded to run the Personal Support Programme.

The Personal Support Programme recognised early in its development that different approaches would be needed to target specific disadvantaged groups and target locational disadvantage. After significant consultation with the community a three-tiered funding allocation approach was established:

- Stage 1 involved a competitive selection process completed in May 2002 to engage providers in most regions and communities.
- Stage 2 will involve targeted selection to fill gaps through community capacity building and fostering community partnerships.
- Stage 3 is innovative pilots to test new ideas and different service delivery models for the high level disadvantaged groups.

The focus of activity during 2002-03 is the indigenous pilots as this group has been the historically hardest to service in the Community Support Programme. With this in mind a number of places have been set-aside for the Personal Support Programme pilots designed to be more flexible and responsive of Indigenous participants.

FaCS’ recent experiences and contemporary research identified challenges for Indigenous access to and experience within the Personal Support Programme. Three approaches were identified to address these challenges.

The first is a ‘partnering opportunity’ model as it was important for the Personal Support Programme to gain leverage to provide broader coverage in rural, remote and regional Australia from work that is already being done. The Westgate Community Initiative pilot
in Victoria is one pilot focused on this partnership driven model. The Westgate Community Initiatives Group is an existing Personal Support Programme service provider who has partnered with an Indigenous owned and operated organization ‘From Little Things’ based in Western Melbourne. This organization has a greater understanding of the issues facing Indigenous people living in this region such as long-term unemployment. Both organizations have something to offer each other. The Westgate Community Initiatives Group staff will better understand the needs of Indigenous clients and establish networks with Indigenous organisations. ‘From Little Things’ will use the existing knowledge and experience of the Westgate Community Initiatives Group in the Personal Support Programme processes and administrative systems and other service networks.

The second approach is focused on the ‘building block model’. This model takes into account that for many Indigenous Personal Support Programme participants, connections to the family, community or some other associative groups will impact strongly on their ability to participate. The Far North Queensland Indigenous Community Consortium for Social and Emotional Health and Wellbeing pilot is based on this ‘building block’ approach. This pilot project is designed to link three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organizations to provide a service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men held in custody to reunite with family and their community prior to and upon release. The organisations will work together to promote and secure access to clients, supply counseling support to the client and families, identify the barriers, needs and obstacles of the client and deliver a flexible service to find employment, achieve economic and/or social outcomes and participate in their communities.

The third approach is a ‘culturally driven transition’. For some Indigenous participants what constitutes a social outcome will be different from that of a non-Indigenous participant. The role of gaining cultural knowledge cannot be under-estimated as means of overcoming non-vocational barriers to participation such as drug and/or alcohol abuse or the existence of domestic violence. The Alice Springs/Kununurra Job Future Network Mentoring pilot is an example of a ‘culturally driven transition model’. Under the JOB futures Pilot Mentoring Program, adult Indigenous mentors will work on a one-to-one basis with Personal Support Programme clients to provide culturally appropriate professional support.
Three other Indigenous Personal Support Programme pilots are also being funded.

Jobs, Education and Training crèches is another ‘negotiation’ style of service delivery within FaCS that provides funding and support for crèches in Indigenous communities located in WA, NT and SA where no other services exist. Many of these crèches have been very successful in engaging communities and providing essential services so that parents can undertake approved activities and children can receive care.

Community involvement underpins the establishment of Jobs, Education and Training crèches as a community must provide a premise for a child care centre before it can be funded under the Jobs, Education and Training program. Indigenous communities throughout the NT have crèches currently operating from within women’s centres, schools, youth centres and stand-alone buildings. Some Indigenous communities have received one-off capital funding through the Jobs, Education and Training Program matched by the NT Government to assist establishment of these crèches. Other communities have used grants through Community Development Employment Programs (CDEP) or donated time by local trades people to establish a building.

Negotiation has been an important aspect to the development and operation of these crèches. With agreement from the NT Government the licensing arrangements have been amended to enable local Indigenous women to run and work at these crèches. Local women undertake a first-aid course and train in early childhood. Some Indigenous women also undertake literacy and numeracy courses.

Jobs, Education and Training crèches are now powerful assets in Indigenous communities. Not only do the crèches improve the health of Indigenous children and provide employment and training opportunities for local Indigenous women but they also provide additional benefits for the community as a whole. Indigenous childcare workers have increased their confidence and have begun to organise fund raising events - in one community an event was organised to raise money to buy a video camera to film the children. The crèches are being used to educate women and children about nutrition, cooking and hygiene and other issues such as vaccination and teenage pregnancy. Indigenous people are also using crèches to educate children about
Indigenous culture. Children from the crèches are also experiencing less transitional problems when they enter school.

For more information about the outcomes from this program please refer to the First Edition of the Jobs, Education and Training Onsite Crèche Newsletter attached to this paper.

The third point along the service delivery continuum for FaCS is the ‘partnership’ system. For FaCS, partnership refers to situations where joint approaches to problem solving are needed, where there are shared risks to achieve an outcome and where there is recognition of a need to develop solutions with a community without easily identifiable or measurable results.

An example of a partnership system is the Indigenous Communities Coordination Pilot. This pilot is based on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreement that all governments would work together to improve the social and economic well being of Indigenous people and communities. Governments agreed that:

• they must work together better at all levels and across all departments and agencies; and
• Indigenous communities and governments must work in partnership and share responsibility for achieving outcomes and for building the capacity of people in communities to manage their own affairs.

Mark Sullivan as Secretary of FaCS, has the responsibility as the lead Commonwealth agency for progress in Wadeye, a remote Indigenous community in the Northern Territory. All three partners, the Wadeye community, the Commonwealth and NT governments, have signed a Shared Responsibility Agreement articulating the issues identified by the community and detailing the contribution of each of the partners to meeting and sustaining the priorities and outcomes.
Wadeye has been committed to developing their own governance structure to enable participation as equal partners with government in decision-making. They have been working with governments for seven years to develop their capacity to enable their active participation in addressing issues they have identified as most important to their community. Representatives from the twenty land owning families of the Wadeye Region have formed a new representative council under the principles of self-governance and community decisions making, which the local people refer to as the Thamarrurr Regional Government. This is based on a traditional model of decision-making and governance, which has reemerged.

The three priority areas identified by the Thamarrurr are housing and construction; women and families; and youth. Employment and training was considered so important that it is an integral component in each of the priority areas.

The partnership model will provide communities with the ability to identify local priorities and manage their affairs so that any assistance would be sustainable and of long-term benefit to people in the community.

**SERVICE DELIVERY CHALLENGES**

It is a challenge for FaCS to manage the sometimes complex and ‘different’ relationships. However if FaCS does not continually address the issues around service delivery we risk failing to be aware of environmental and cultural issues that may impact on our service delivery options. These challenges include:

- Engagement of Government and the wider community (including the management of diverse and cultural groups) towards actions that complement service delivery and the achievement of FaCS outcomes
It is important that FaCS combines the capacities of Government, philanthropic individuals, welfare sector and business and community into achieving the best outcome for FaCS. Engagement is broader than just skills, people and plans. It includes commitment, resources and the leadership and structures for participation.

- Balance between government involvement, regulation and accountability and the community’s ability for self reliance
  
  - We should be empowering communities to take responsibility for their own outcomes. This means developing capacity so they can make informed decisions about resources and their own futures.

- Service delivery options for individuals with multiple barriers and changing needs over time
  
  - The McClure report covered specific issues relevant to service delivery including Individualised Service Delivery. It identified the need to address service delivery options for individuals with a number of barriers and linking individuals to appropriate services when their needs change over time.

- Service delivery approaches that meet future policy environment including structural ageing (combined with declining fertility rates), changing demographic profiles within different regions and rising welfare dependency
  
  - It is important that FaCS evaluates the policy environment and adjusts their forward-looking service delivery approaches accordingly.

- Maintaining the professional capacity of FaCS to manage service delivery relationships including key relationships and exhibit positive influencing
  
  - The skills of FaCS staff are an essential vehicle to enhance and maintain strong communication channels of collaboration and partnership with service providers and stakeholders.

CONCLUSION
FaCS favors a joined up approach to the delivery of social policy payments and services. For example Personal Support Programme service providers were selected based on their links with other agencies and strong understanding of local networks. FaCS is also developing combined program guidelines and is in the early stages of developing a single funding agreement for youth programs.

FaCS is accountable for government outlays and for ensuring its outcomes contribute to government outcomes. FaCS wants service delivery approaches to meet its policy objectives.

We will seek to improve our policies and practices for disadvantaged groups through the following issues:

- Flexible service delivery approaches. This means:
  - FaCS will consider all service delivery options including the capacity to build on existing or complimentary internal or external programs already in existence, and
  - Continue to explore and develop appropriate avenues for socially disadvantaged groups to have input into the development of policy and program development and implementation.

- All service delivery solutions should intentionally maximise policy outcomes and minimise negative or competing impacts on all other FaCS’ objectives. To manage this process Service Delivery solutions should:
  - Promote healthy communication, consultation and relationships with all stakeholders, particularly disadvantaged groups. This also includes all levels of government, non-government organisations, business and the community
  - Follow a corporate approach to assessing and managing risk, and;
  - Utilise management accountability practices that promote transparency
• Effective use of electronic service delivery to enhance relationships with service providers, noting that:
  
  − The individual, the family and the community must not be disadvantaged through any introduction of electronic service delivery mechanisms, and
  
  − The privacy of information for the individual, the family and the community must not be compromised through the operation of electronic service delivery mechanisms.

• Managing service delivery should emphasis assurance of policy outcomes rather than reporting of outputs or the purchasing of inputs.

FaCS is committed to achieving the best possible outcome for the individual, the family, and the community. To do this FaCS must address how services are delivered through consultation with the community and other government and non-government organisations.

Thank you.

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1 2001 Hemispheric Social Inclusion Index (HSII), page 7