Institute of Child Protection Studies

Murray Darling Basin Initiative Focused Literature Review

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES FROM THE LITERATURE

A socially inclusive society is one in which all citizens have the opportunity to secure a job; access services; connect with family, friends, work, personal interests and neighbours; deal with personal crisis such as ill health, bereavement or the loss of a job; and have their voice heard.

Social inclusion is a value based, utopian concept which refers to broad equality of opportunities and life chances for all citizens. Its relevance for service delivery agencies is that it creates an imperative to work proactively to 'raise the bar' for individuals and groups who, although diverse, have in common: economic vulnerability, a sense of powerlessness and voicelessness, an inability to participate in the customary life of their communities and diminished life experiences and life prospects.

Working towards a socially inclusive society refers to the strategies and activities necessary to build individual and community capacity so that all citizens can access these opportunities. Coordinated policies and service delivery are needed across national state and local governments and the community sector as a way of ensuring that no Australian is excluded from meaningful participation in the mainstream economic and social life of the country.

Rural communities affected by drought suffer place based disadvantage which constrains their capacity to access these opportunities.

Some places have a high volume of particular problems and also suffer from multiple, cumulative and overlapping problems. A range of social indicators such as unemployment and the need for income support are entrenched within particular local places across Australia. People are less able to participate in social, economic, family and civic life due to increased poverty, unemployment, family breakdown, diminished physical and mental health and lack of access to education.

These factors seriously constrain their ability to manage the change necessary to address the challenges confronting small rural communities including the impacts of climate variability.

Increased levels of social inclusion are achieved through Individual and community capacity building ie: improved stocks of human, social, financial, physical and natural capital

Definitions of 'capacity building' specifically refer to actions for the purposes of bringing about development and change. This involves actions by all, including government to build the overall stock of human, social, financial, physical and natural capital and to enable people to use these increased 'stocks' to improve their circumstances. Centrelink is best positioned to help build human and social capital which, in turn, increases the likelihood of improved levels of financial and physical capital and management of the natural environment.

Individual capacity is strengthened when people have increased levels of health and wellbeing, skills and knowledge, employment and basic financial security, and the ability to act as leaders who can motivate and support others

The capacity of individuals to collaborate with others to achieve goals and innovative solutions is affected by a range of personal attributes and circumstances. Helping people to achieve basic levels of personal wellbeing, financial security to care for their families, new knowledge and skills and the capacity to lead and motivate others are important first steps for working cooperatively at the community level and for putting innovative ideas into action.

Community capacity can be strengthened by linking people with a wide range of existing and new social networks including with government and other powerful civic institutions

The capacity of communities to be actively involved in achieving a socially inclusive society is associated with the strength of their social connections and the trust that enables them to do things for each other (social capital); and the ability to work together for the public good (collective efficacy). It also includes the purposeful efforts that are made to reduce existing disparities and inequalities and to work with vulnerable groups to prevent social exclusion (social cohesion).

Increasing the strength and the range of social connections is critical to helping people get by and deal with everyday life and to provide new information, knowledge and contacts to deal with adverse circumstances that are outside the scope of existing

networks. It is also critical to enhancing the overall level of trust in governance systems necessary for a sense of renewed hope and optimism for the future.

Individual and community capacity building is best enabled by governments through joined up policy and joined up service delivery

Complex interlinked problems can only be addressed through collaborative, joined up policies, strategies and activities. The social isolation, economic vulnerability, reduced access to services, future employment challenges and threats to the natural environment in the Murray Darling Basin cannot be addressed by any one group working on its own. The best way for governments to help build the various elements of individual and community capacity is by sharing resources and working collaboratively across sectors. This includes across the functions of, for example, health, education, employment, income support, community services and environmental management. It also means working across the different institutions that daily interact with individuals, families and communities including Commonwealth, State and Local government service providers, the Not for Profit and For Profit service agencies, Community organizations such as sporting clubs and multicultural groups, and Public Institutions such as schools, churches, hospitals.

Joined up service delivery is specifically achieved by a range of place based, purposeful, collaborative activities which seek to: increase knowledge of barriers to social inclusion, increase accessibility of services, identify and address service gaps, and create new service options and opportunities

The public officials at the front lines of government service delivery agencies are uniquely positioned to build trust with local services and other community groups. These are critical to understanding the experience of people in rural communities and the barriers to social inclusion that they face. Relationships developed as a result of this 'better understanding' lead to shared initiatives to improve the accessibility of service delivery and then to collaborative efforts to address service gaps. These are very important stages in the development of effective partnerships. However, it is possible for joined up service delivery to go further than this; together with other government and non government service providers and community groups they can assist in the creation of new opportunities for individuals and communities.

Joined up policy can be achieved if mechanisms are in place for gathering intelligence from those who work on the front lines of all of these institutions. In turn, service deliverers need structures in place to hear directly from service users.

Government service deliverers, often in their capacity as local leaders, must be able to fulfil the expectations that are naturally conferred on them: that they represent government and can therefore provide a policy conduit between government and the 'community'. To do this successfully there needs to be increased recognition that building individual and community capacity can be best achieved by those who work and reside in communities, and who interact daily with the public. Policy feedback loops are clearly required if government service deliverers are to take best advantage of opportunities to develop the trust and social capital that are proven contributors to social and economic development.

INTRODUCTION

Australian Catholic University (the Institute of Child Protection Studies) has been commissioned to develop an Evaluation Framework for Centrelink's Murray Darling Basin Initiative (MDBI). The purpose of this focused literature review is to inform the development of that Framework. It is important to develop as early as possible an evaluation framework which will provide a plan for assessing whether key policy objectives of the Commonwealth Government have been met. The evaluation framework and program logic needs to be underpinned by strong theoretical and research based understanding of concepts.

The Framework will be used in coming years as the basis for assessing the effectiveness of Centrelink's contribution towards Government's policy outcomes in the Murray-Darling Basin. The Institute will use the early work undertaken by the MDBI in its first few months to test and refine the appropriateness of the Evaluation Framework.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will focus specifically on the key concepts that underpin the evaluation framework. It will be structured around the following questions:

- What does 'social inclusion' mean in the context of rural communities that are suffering the impacts of drought?
- What are the meanings of the concepts of 'individual and community capacity building' and joined up service delivery? How are these concepts linked to social inclusion?
- What are the relevant roles and activities for a government service delivery agency which seeks to increase social inclusion through capacity building and joined up service delivery?

This focused literature draws on knowledge from five sources: policy knowledge; organizational knowledge; practitioner knowledge; service user knowledge; and research knowledge. Our broad strategy includes the key words capacity building,

drought, social inclusion, place based, joined up policy, joined up service delivery. Date limits on searches will usually be 2000-2008. Main databases accessed are Blackwell synergy, Academic Search Premier, Family & Society Plus, Informit, Sage publications. Wide use is also made of Google and Google Scholar.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

CLIMATE VARIABILITY AND THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN

In the Murray-Darling Basin, the combined effects of climate variability including drought and diversions for irrigation have focused national attention on the future of local communities. While there are some large and thriving towns and cities many other smaller towns are struggling to survive or are clearly dying. Forty one per cent of the nation's gross value of agriculture is derived from the Basin and 71% of the total area of irrigated crops and pastures in Australia are also found here. Current hardships felt in the Basin are described in a recent internal Centrelink document.

> As the drought continues to bear down and without significant inflows the need to restrict water allocations to irrigators in the vast majority of irrigation areas exacerbated the adverse impacts from many years of drought, reduced agricultural output, stymied economic activity and corresponding flow on effects to the economic and social well-being within rural communities in the MDB (Centrelink, 2008:6)

Following the May 2007 meeting of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council the Council expressed deep concern at the record low inflows into the Murray System over the past year and at the effects of the severe drought on individuals, communities, irrigators and the environmental health of the Murray-Darling Basin. Prior to the meeting its Community Advisory Committee (CAC) reported that the drought continued to cause considerable pain and hardship and highlighted the need for government support for those affected.

The CAC indicated that the impacts of the drought affected the capacity of the community to change the way natural resources are managed, "as individuals and communities are consumed by the immediate situation". At the May 2007 meeting

ministers agreed to work cooperatively to minimise the impacts of the drought wherever possible (Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2007)

In response to the growing concerns about the impacts of climate change including drought, the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments provided an extensive range of additional payments, personal support and other social programs to support affected individuals, families and communities.

CENTRELINK'S MURRAY DARLING BASIN INITIATIVE (MDBI)

Centrelink's Murray-Darling Basin Service Delivery Coordination Unit was established in July 2007 as part of the Federal Government's 2007-08 Budget commitments. Specifically the unit was set up to

- coordinate services,
- create links with other government and non-government agencies, and
- provide a focus on enabling those affected by the drought or changes to water allocations to move forward (www.centrelink.gov.au)

Recognising the similarities between the impacts of drought and other catastrophic natural events that have intensified as a result of climate change such as bushfires and cyclones, the Unit was designed along the lines of Centrelink's response to cyclones Larry and Monica. It is responsible for coordinating a broad range of Government programs in the Murray Darling Basin area and is geographically based in the Murray-Darling Basin.

The overall program aims

"In collaboration with other federal, state and local governments and community agencies, [to]deliver a complete and consistent service in both payments and programs to all people affected by drought and restricted water allocations in the Murray Darling Basin"[Outcomes and Outputs Framework]

Three outcomes are identified:

Outcome 1: *Joined up Policy* - Informing and Influencing Policy and Program Development

Outcome 2: *Joined up Service Delivery* - Improving Access to Services

Outcome 3: *Building Self-reliance and Community Capacity* - Meeting reasonable customer and community expectations through an innovative engagement approach

THE POLITICAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

In November 2007 the newly elected Australian Government came to power with a policy platform which included increasing 'social inclusion'. Specifically this is described on the new Prime Minister's Election 07's policy website as a focus on all Australians playing a full role in the economic, social, psychological and political life of the country. More recently the Honourable Julia Gillard, in a speech to the 2008 Conference of the Australian Council of Social Services, stated that

from the Government's perspective, it means coordinating policies across national, state and local governments and with the community sector to ensure no Australian is excluded from meaningful participation in the mainstream economic and social life of the country (The Honourable Julia Gillard, 2008).

The new policy focus on social inclusion creates an imperative for Centrelink to ensure that its aims and activities and the evaluation framework used to monitor its progress in the future are consistent with overarching concepts incorporated in the new Government's social inclusion agenda. The concept of social inclusion is an appropriate starting point for the literature review.

In her speech to the Australian Council of Social Services on 10 April 2008 the Honourable Julia Gillard, Minister for Social Inclusion, further defined the Government's meaning of the concept (The Honourable Julia Gillard, 2008). She framed the "social inclusion challenge" by acknowledging the significance of 'place based' disadvantage.

Professor Tony Vinson demonstrated that people growing up in Australia's poorest postcodes are up to seven times more likely than the average to suffer from low incomes, long-term unemployment, early school leaving, physical and mental disabilities, prison admissions and to be at risk of child abuse and neglect (Vinson, 2007).

Minister Gillard reiterated the meaning of 'social inclusion' and the government's overall goal as giving all Australians the opportunity to:

- Secure a job;
- Access services;
- Connect with family, friends, work, personal interests and neighbours;
- Deal with personal crisis such as ill health, bereavement or the loss of a job; and
- Have their voice heard.

The government also reiterated the importance of coordinated policies across national, state and local governments and the community sector and emphasised this was the way to "ensure no Australian is excluded from meaningful participation in the mainstream economic and social life of the country"(The Honourable Julie Gillard, 2008).

SOCIAL INCLUSION

EXCLUSION

The concept of 'social inclusion' is linked in the literature to 'social exclusion"; that is: the way in which some individuals and groups are *excluded* from enjoying the quality of life that most people in their society take for granted. Although it is a concept that can refer to a wide range of different groups (for example, many people with disabilities, many Indigenous people, many people who are without sufficient income) all have the following attributes in common

- economic vulnerability,
- a sense of powerlessness and voicelessness
- inability to participate in the life of the community
- diminished life experiences and life prospects (Mitchell & Shillington, 2002)

'Social exclusion' has proved to be a useful and flexible concept in the UK and Europe (Weiss, 2003 in Cass, 2003) for understanding the experiences of people who are not just financially poor but are also unable to participate on a number of different levels: in family life, in the economic life of the community (for example, paid employment), in education and other forms of personal development, and in 'normal' community life. As a concept 'social exclusion' moves our understanding of disadvantage from a focus solely on income to a consideration of broader measures of well-being and the wider causes and consequences of poverty.

Being 'excluded' therefore does not just refer to being without a job or having an income below the poverty line; it also refers to the general sense that people have that there are little prospects for their own or for their children's future.

Social exclusion has also been defined as a rupture of the relationship between the individual and society due to a failure of social institutions (such as government) to make it possible for individuals to participate in

- democratically
- economically
- in family life and socially,
- the civic life of the community (Bergham, 1998:258-259 in Berger-Schmitt, 2000).

It is these four domains or spheres of 'exclusion' that form a basis for understanding a possible role for government in building social *inclusion*.

INCLUSION

Social *inclusion* emerged as an important policy concept in Europe in the 1980s in response to growing social divisions resulting from new labour market conditions and an increasing number of people receiving income support (Mitchell & Shillington, 2002). Its relevance also to environmental policy is apparent from the same period, for example: it was a principle recognized as fundamentally important in the European Union's Water Directive Framework and Agenda developed by the Rio Summit in 1992 (UNCED, 1992). The concept of social inclusion is not just a response to exclusion. It has a value on its own as both a process and a goal.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AS A GOAL

As a broad utopian goal social inclusion refers to quality of life including the right (and support necessary) to be involved in decisions affecting oneself, one's family and one's community. Amartya Sen describes social inclusion as

> characterized by a society's widely shared social experience and active participation, by broad equality of opportunities and life chances for individuals and by the achievement of a basic level of well-being for all citizens (Sen, 2001 :222).

'Social inclusion' thus is a value based concept which is useful for helping to "raise the bar" and to think about "where we want to be and how to get there" (Mitchell and Shillington, 2002: viii). For service delivery agencies it means more than simply removing barriers or risks to participation to include an active investment and action to

bring about the conditions necessary for increased inclusion. More than just a concentration on income poverty and inequality it also encompasses the physical and economic assets, social assets and political abilities of individuals and groups (Mitchell & Shillington, 2002).

The concept of 'social inclusion' is beginning to emerge in the Australian context. A 'Social Inclusion Initiative' including a 'Social inclusion Board was established by the South Australian Premier in 2002. The concept of social inclusion is described on its website as referring to:

> a society where all people feel valued, their differences are respected and their basic needs both physical and emotional are met, so that as members of the society they are empowered in their participation and contribution (SA Government).

SOCIAL INCLUSION AS A PROCESS

Implicit in achieving the above goals of social inclusion is the building of individual and community capacity. To understand what this means in the Murray Darling Basin context and thus the role of the MDBI a first step is to examine the literature on how the impacts of climate change, including drought have contributed to social exclusion in rural communities. The paper will then examine the literature to assess how these impacts can become the specific focus of individual and community capacity building achieved through joined up policy and service delivery.

EXCLUSION/INCLUSION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY DROUGHT

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have brought a period of sustained drought to Australia's rural areas. This is evident in not only reduced rainfall, but average temperatures up to 1.6[degrees] hotter (Lindsay, 2003:42 in Alston & Kent, 2004a). Impacts of the drought have been quantified at $7 billion (Botterill &Fisher, 2003, in Alston & Kent, 2004) making it not only environmentally but also economically disastrous. However, while we are increasingly alerted to the environmental and economic impacts of climate variability including drought we know comparatively little

about its social impacts including impacts on health and mental health, family life, children and young people, labour markets, and levels of community trust and civic participation. (Alston & Kent, 2004a). All of these impacts are exacerbated by hardships based on where people live and the evidence that rural and regional Australians suffer significant hardships compared to other Australians. This has been called "place based" disadvantage (Vinson, 2007).

PLACE BASED DISADVANTAGE

In recent years there has been increasing interest in the significance of place and its relevance for social disadvantage or exclusion. Tony Vinson's work with Jesuit Social Services, culminating in the publication of a number of reports over the years (Vinson, 1999; Vinson, 2004; Vinson, 2007) shows that 'cumulative disadvantage', measured on a range of social indicators including income support and unemployment, is entrenched within particular local places across Australia.

Vinson argues that deeply entrenched problems in particular places occurred because governments did not seriously work together with local communities to address structural causes (Vinson 1999). He calls for locality specific measures to supplement general social policy if the accumulated problems facing residents are to be addressed (Vinson, 2004). Vinson describes the degree to which many of the disadvantages are compressed within a small proportion of Victorian and NSW postcodes as "remarkable and strategically compelling" (p.47) and, further asserts:

> If a state's intention is to mount large-scale interventions while maintaining a clear sense of focus, then the geographic concentration of high volumes of problems can be an appropriate starting point (Vinson, 2004:52).

In his more recent studies he argues the case for more integrated or 'joined up' local service delivery arrangements (2004, p. 52), particularly in those areas that not only have a high volume of particular problems but also suffer from overlapping, multiple problems. These can "constitute a 'web of disadvantage' that constrains people's efforts

to use life opportunities that are generally available to individuals, families and communities" (2004, p. 52).

Vinson acknowledges that although macro economic factors are important sources of inequality and poverty he argues that neighbourhoods have their own independent effects and that the "causal associations between poor neighbourhoods and other social problems … are more than the consequences of macro economic factors and household characteristics" (Vinson, 2004:36). He cites evidence from a review of 40 studies of community effects since the mid 1990s, which show that an accumulation of problems in particular areas has a serious impact on the wellbeing of residents (Sampson, Mornoff and Gannon Rowley, 2002 in Vinson, 2004:36).

The importance of these studies for understanding the extent of exclusion in rural Australia is apparent in these studies. Vinson's 1999 study found that there were only two Sydney locations in the top thirty most disadvantaged areas, the remainder were in the depressed manufacturing city of Newcastle (5) or non metropolitan areas of NSW (23). He found that in relation to poverty levels, rural and regional Australians earn on average 24% less than those in cities and that thirty three of Australia's thirty seven poorest electorates are in rural areas (Vinson, 1999, Lawrence, 1995 in Alston, 2002b). An important outcome of Vinson's work is a renewed interest in 'place based' approaches to reducing disadvantage.

PROGRESSIVE DECLINE BEFORE THE MOST RECENT DROUGHT

Many rural communities were in a state of crisis prior to the drought. Rural population decline, a feature of rural Australia for decades, is attributed to farm mechanisation, improvements in transport, the increase in the size of farms and agricultural restructuring since the 1970s (Tonts, 2000 in Alston & Kent, 2004). Structural adjustments and global financial changes have also created an environment where

financial and family stresses are an ongoing feature of rural life (Hall & Scheltens, 2005). Furthermore small towns that are reliant on broad acre farming, such as cropping and livestock (for example: wheat and sheep) are the ones most likely to be in decline.

Marked population shifts from inland areas to the cities and coastal regions following marginal returns in agriculture have left behind ageing populations (Alston & Kent, 2004c). Although 95% of farms are still owned by farm families, over the last quarter of the 20th century the number of farms declined by about 25% (to approximately 40,000 from 140, 700), (Gray & Lawrence 2001,Garnaut & Lim-Applegate 1998 in Alston & Kent, 2004).

FINANCIAL PRESSURES ON FARM FAMILIES

Drought has led to an increase in debt, workloads and stress for rural families, reduced employment opportunities in small communities, and increased levels of poverty (Kent, 2006). Rural women have tended to not only increase their farm labour and household and care work, but at the same time are more likely to be working off the farm. As mentioned above, financial upheaval is not restricted to impacts of drought and has been a longstanding recurrent feature of rural life. Some commentators make the point that viewing the drought as a 'crisis' can obscure the fact that ongoing recurrent financial stress over many years is a feature of rural life for many families (Hall & Scheltens, 2005) Before the drought approximately 50 percent of farms were already reliant on income off the farm with approximately 80 percent of this being done by women (Society of St Vincent de Paul 1998 in Alston & Kent, 2004; Alston, 1995, 2002a, 2007).

PRESSURES ON LABOUR MARKET

After the onset of drought the lack of employment opportunities for people in the rural labour market became more pronounced with an even greater need for off farm income support. In addition to the dire situation facing farming families in small communities dependent on agriculture, small business operators are severely affected by drought

resulting in a significant downturn in income and the need to lay off casual staff. Expenditure by farm families in smaller towns is a significant input to small businesses and is an important source of income for many non farm businesses. [1] The 2003 CPA Australia Small Business Survey concluded that drought had a negative impact on 24% of businesses and that only 33% of businesses were aware of government drought assistance. By 2007 29% of small businesses were reporting that drought had a negative impact on their business (CPA Australia, 2008).

There are obvious implications for the labour market and reduced employment prospects as a result of these survival measures by small business operators. Seasonal workers and contractors are clearly affected with great reductions in the availability of casual work. Many people, including Indigenous people, report losing casual employment as contract shearers, harvesters, and other agriculturally-based workers (Alston, 2007). Furthermore, the obligation to apply for a number of jobs each fortnight in fulfillment of work test obligations to receive income support has further disadvantaged contractors who are then less able to chase contract work further afield.

STRESSORS IMPACTING ON MENTAL HEALTH

The restructuring of farming businesses, the enormous financial stress of drought and the associated impacts on families play a role in the mental health and wellbeing of rural communities and can trigger anxiety, depression, anger and grief and family breakdown (Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 2000). A study on Australian Farming 1988-1997, prior to the current drought, found that approximately one male farmer committed suicide every 4 days and that this rate was significantly higher than rural males who are not farmers and of the male population in general(Page & Fragar, 2002). However, no updated figures on farmer suicide are available in the literature since the research undertaken by Page and Fragar in 2002 (Beyond Blue, 2008).

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[1] ABARE Australian Farm Surveys Report 2001, p. 29

Despite decreases in the use of fire-arms in the wider rural population death by firearms was found to be the most common form of suicide. Higher rates of suicide among farming families have also been found in the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and Canada (Page & Fragar, 2002).

It has been noted by some researchers that decisions by farmers to end their lives through suicide are possibly influenced by a number of additional problems, apart from the existence of a mental illness such as severe depression. The burden of running a business subject to changing agricultural policy and working in an environment that makes it difficult to admit problems and seek appropriate help have been identified as additional factors. One recent Australian study found that mental health stressors associated with living in farming communities and farming work, included

- financial difficulties,
- government bureaucracy,
- decision making,
- family/intergenerational conflict,
- complexity of work and workload,
- personal and family problems, and
- isolation and loneliness (predominantly amongst female farmers).
- chronic illness,
- sense of responsibility
- living in a small close-knit community (Judd et al, 2006)

In the study by Page and Fragar (2002) three related issues emerged as barriers to help seeking from formal health providers: (1) a preference to seek help from friends and family, (2) limited acceptability of mental health care and stigma around mental illness and (3) limited accessibility of formal health providers and services.

Although farming communities have been described as offering support to each other in difficult times, communities can be enmeshed and exclusionary to outsiders. In 2006 Judd et al's conducted a study conducted a self-report questionnaire a number of

personality measures between farmers (*n*=371) and non-farming rural residents (*n*=380), semi-structured interviews with farmers (*n*=32) to gain a richer understanding of how the context of farming and mental health interact. The study demonstrated that women who had moved onto their husband's farms reported more negative impacts of isolation, a sense of not belonging and being treated like an outsider, even after decades of residence in a town (Judd et al, 2006).

DECREASING LEVELS OF SOCIAL CONNECTION, TRUST AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

In 2003, an exploratory research project on the social impacts of drought funded by the New South Wales Department of Agriculture and the New South Wales Premier's Department found a lack of social capital and weakening of social networks generally in communities affected by drought. Lack of finances for holidays and other leisure activities also had the compounding effect of loss of social contact and increasing isolation of families.

The weakening of networks was accompanied by a general mistrust for government and a sense that other Australians did not understand the hardships being experienced (Alston & Kent, 2004b). Declining levels of 'vertical' social capital was evident as community members increasingly view governments and government instrumentalities with suspicion and mistrust. Many people in this research spoke of feeling alienated from society, from politicians and political parties, from neighbours and from urban Australians (Alston & Kent, 2004c).

Another social effect of drought has been to reduce the time available for cooperative volunteering which is generally regarded as a key part of the survival of rural communities and towns. People are reporting that they are tiring of committees, public meetings and other 'traditional' forms of civic participation (J. Cavaye, 2003).

In the 2004 report of the above research by Alston and Kent, the following were areas that the authors considered needed attention to address the erosion of trust and its impacts on social and civic participation:

- Significant loss of trust in institutions and a loss of faith in representative government;
- Levels of consultation surrounding legislative changes
- Policy around determining the "Exceptional Circumstances" (EC) legislation being reliant on community members actively collecting data demonstrating their community's need
- The EC application process
- Whether the EC process is the most appropriate way to deal with farm poverty (Alston & Kent, 2004c: 101)

DIFFERENT IMPACTS ON MEN AND WOMEN

Stehlik, Lawrence and Gray note that men and women experience drought differently. Women for example may focus on decisions about

- The affordability of children's education
- How to restrict the household budget
- Accessing food and services for the family
- How much to work off the farm
- Whether to leave the area altogether to find work
- Balancing on and off farm roles
- Keeping up community involvement (Stehlik, Lawrence, & Gray, 2000)

The literature generally indicates that farm women not only take care of family and community (Alston 2000) they also work on and off the farm and their paid work often ensures that their men can continue to farm (Shortall 2002 in Alston 2006). Furthermore Judd et als 2006 study demonstrates that women are also emotionally impacted by the stress associated with drought. They identified effects such as comfort eating, increased alcohol use, crying and irritability and feeling isolated, inadequate and sad (Judd et al., 2006). Another serious impact of stress on families is the reported higher levels of domestic and family violence in rural communities affected by drought. There is a general lack of research in this area however welfare groups recently

reported that the incidence of domestic violence has doubled in the last two years (ABC News, September 7 2007).

In contrast, Alston and Kent's exploratory research for the NSW government (Alston & Kent, 2004) which included 37 women and 25 men from farm families, found that for men, drought meant a great deal of extra farm labour such as carting water and feeding livestock on a daily basis. After a few years this becomes a grind that takes its toll on health. Many of the men interviewed, unlike their wives, were finding it difficult to leave their properties and were becoming increasingly socially isolated because of their workload and weariness (Alston, 2006).

Judd et al's 2006 study also found that the elevated rate of suicide amongst farmers could not be simply explained by an elevated rate of mental health problems. Gender, personality and community attitudes that limit a person's ability to acknowledge or talk about their problems and seek help were also found to be possible significant risk factors for suicide in farmers. The sense of failure experienced by men on their farms and their small businesses was compounded by the sense of individual responsibility they felt for failure including the financial consequences of poor decision making and also the sense that one's decisions would be judged by the rest of the community. During times of stress, male participants reported the need to 'get on with the job... to keep going' and take practical steps towards resolving difficulties rather than reflecting upon negative thoughts and feelings (Page & Fragar, 2002, Judd et al, 2006). Participants consistently reported that it was important to 'stay positive' and 'strong' regardless of problems and that there was little point in talking about how they actually felt at these times.

IMPACTS ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

There is a general absence of literature on the impacts of disaster or climate variability, including drought, on children. However, in a study on the impacts of drought on secondary education in Australia's rural and remote areas (Kent, 2006) found that young people often work long hours on farms or in paid work, sometimes missing

school as a result. Young people in towns are also working in part-time jobs, earning money to support their own needs and for their education. The increased time working has had an impact on their ability to participate in activities such as sporting and cultural events. Teachers revealed, for example, that poverty levels meant that young people wore their uniforms longer and needed to seek assistance to purchase uniforms (Kent, 2006).

However in another recent study, children from rural and remote regions of New South Wales were asked for their interpretations of the impacts of drought on their lives (Dean & Stain, 2007). Interestingly this study found that the emotional impacts of changes to family and community life appear to have been moderated by positive attitudes toward their country lifestyle. In the face of declining rural community networks, the research recommended that children should be supported through programs that maintain resilience in the face of recurring environmental stressors (Dean & Stain, 2007).

GAPS IN SERVICE DELIVERY

To further exacerbate the impacts of drought, people in rural communities are additionally disadvantaged by lack of access to the services that most people in Australia take for granted. In 2005 Cheers and Taylor identified several ways in which rural people are disadvantaged in the way welfare services are delivered, including

- a general withdrawal of government services,
- an increase in the number of services outsourced to private providers
- a declining rural service infrastructure.
- in many cases contracts have been awarded to organisations from outside particular areas adding to the loss of local expertise, knowledge, and networks (Cheers & Taylor, 2005, Duncombe, 1999 Alston 2007).

Health service provision has been particularly affected. Problems of distance and communication have led to inequities in health provision to rural and remote Australians, many of whom are Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders (Rajkumar &

Hoolahan, 2004). Health service providers have migrated back to the cities in recent years and it is increasingly difficult to recruit and retain health practitioners in the bush. This also applies to the providers of mental health services.

INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

The above discussion of social impacts of drought in rural areas is by no means comprehensive; however it does provide some indication of the pressure points in daily life that constrain individuals and the communities in which they live, from seeking collaborative and innovative solutions to the problems they are experiencing. In short, these factors impact on their capacity to

> ...anticipate change, "reframe" problems, mobilize their community, communicate widely, think strategically and make informed decisions (J. M. Cavaye, 2000)

To better understand what 'capacity building' means in this context the following discussion provides a brief outline of concepts in the capacity building literature.

Uncertainty about the meaning of capacity building is evident in the Australian and international arenas. Ryan and Rudland (2002) have observed that for "all the rhetoric that is bandied about in federal, state and community development arenas, it is unclear what is meant by "capacity". Dictionary definitions tend to focus on the ability or power to contain, absorb or hold, to learn, to do, or to produce. These tend to be somewhat self limiting notions, which focus mostly on individuals (Ryan & Rudland, 2002).

The Aspen Institute takes the definition further by referring to certain influences coming together with the specific intent of addressing community problems and opportunities. Capacity building is defined as:

The combined influence of a community's commitment, resources and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities (Aspen Institute—Rural Economic Policy Program., 1996)

A broad definition of 'capacity building' which takes it beyond the realm of the individual to organisations and systems, includes the notion of going beyond program goals and also identifies the importance of sustainability is provided by Ryan and Rudland. They emphasise the importance of:

Programs or initiatives aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of individuals, organisations and systems to achieve or define outcomes, by strengthening the knowledge-base, competence, resources, networks, infrastructure and other forms of support.

- Expanding possibilities of doing things together, finding ways to engage with problems that go beyond program goals.
- More broadly, the process by which these abilities are mutually developed in an ongoing and sustainable fashion (Ryan & Rudland, 2002).

The European Centre for Development of Policy Management has identified a lack of clarity about what capacity building "looks like, what its components are, how it develops and what outsiders can do to encourage its development" (European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2003 in Macadam, Drinan, Inall, & McKenzie, 2003).

To increase understanding of the meaning of capacity building Macadam et al, 2003 undertook a survey of concepts and terminology associated with the concept, in policy documents within Australia and internationally (at Attachment A). They found a number of key concepts emerging from the review such as:

- Intervention,
- enhancement of human and social capital
- increased motivation or commitment to act or empowerment to act independently,
- the expectation of an outcome in the form of an improvement of some kind (Macadam et al, 2003:5).

In answering the question "what constitutes an improvement" Macadam et al (2003) identified improvements in four spheres:

- Business profitability and sustainability
- Industry profitability and sustainability
- The ecological health of catchments
- The well being of residents ; and of their communities (p.5)

Drawing on other literature these authors form their own definition of capacity building which we consider has relevance for the Australian Government's overall policy objectives in the Murray Darling Basin area:

Capacity building is construed as externally or internally initiated processes designed to help individuals or groups associated with rural Australia to appreciate and manage their changing circumstances, with the objective of improving the stock of human, social, financial, physical and natural capita in an ethically defensible way (Macadam et al, p. 6)

In other words, through interventions of various types, individuals, organisations and communities are empowered to act and to enhance their knowledge, skills, relationships, businesses, industries, and the natural environment. However, this involves doing more than just increasing the sum total or 'stock' of knowledge, skills and attitudes (human capital), and the building of better relationships (social capital): it means the people whose attributes and relationships are improved are actually able to use these resources to improve their situation and the overall stock of human, social, physical, natural and financial capital to achieve improvements in their circumstances.

Much of the literature about community capacity building which is probably the central focus of the Centrelink's MDBI therefore refers to building the various forms of capital.

The *Community Capitals Framework*, developed by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Iowa State University, is an approach to analysing how communities work. Based on research to uncover characteristics of entrepreneurial and sustainable communities, it was found that the communities most successful in

supporting healthy sustainable community and economic development paid attention to all seven types of capital: <u>natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial and built</u>. In addition to identifying the capitals and the role each plays in community economic development, this approach also focuses on the interaction among these seven capitals as well as how investments in one capital can build assets in others(in Butler, Flora, Emery, Bregendahl, & Bregendahl, 2006). The following figure shows the forms of community capital and there relationship with outcomes: a vital economy, social inclusion and a healthy ecosystem.
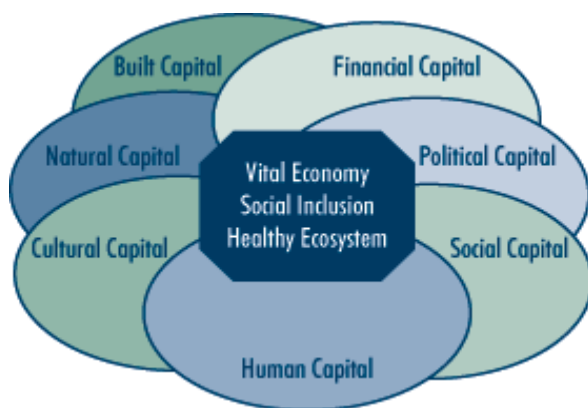
Figure: 1

Community Capital (Butler, Flora, Emery, Bregendahl, & Bregendahl, 2006)

To help identify the kinds of activities that the MDBI needs to focus on in the future, we will now examine in more detail the meaning of <u>human, social and financial capital</u>. It is the building of these three forms of 'capital' which fall most obviously within the scope of the work currently undertaken by the professional staff and rural services officers in the MDBI.

INCREASING HUMAN CAPITAL

Although by no means universally embraced as an idea we think there are advantages in understanding the concept of individual capacity through the literature on 'human capital'; a term generally used to describe the capacity of individuals to contribute to their communities and which the Australian Bureau of Statistics has described as the

general capacity of individuals to "handle day to day events and obstacles, work towards important goals and functions and function effectively in society" (ABS, 1999).

According to Black and Hughes (2001) this 'capacity' is dependent on a number of attributes including

- their willingness and ability to do so,
- their skills and knowledge,
- their capacity to adjust to changing circumstances and
- their levels of health and disability (Black & Hughes, 2001, p.3).

In working to strengthen human capital and thus the potential capacity of a community to 'work towards important goals' it can be argued that the focus of the MBDI should be on increasing individual, family and community willingness and ability to handle day to day events and obstacles, work towards important goals and functions and function effectively in society by:

- increasing access to employment and income security
- building levels of knowledge and skills,
- improving their health and wellbeing
- increasing the ability of people to be leaders who can both support and motivate others to address the need for change.

Each of these is considered now in a little more detail.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME SECURITY

Having paid employment and basic financial security offers multiple benefits. It reduces anxiety and other mental health pressures about how to put food on the table and pay basic living costs, it helps people participate in the customary life of their communities and it enables them to work collaboratively with others to address challenges.

BUILDING LEVELS OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Knowledge and skills have an obvious role to play in building community resilience including the ability of communities to respond to changing economic and social conditions.

The pursuit of education in metropolitan centres is one of the main reasons people leave rural communities thus decreasing the overall 'stock' of human capital in communities already under stress. Increasing knowledge and skills through education is an important part of enabling agricultural producers and small business owners to respond in innovative ways to changing markets and technologies. Informal education complements formal education, although it raises the problem of knowledge that is not validated by formal qualifications (Black, Duff, Saggers, & Baines, 2000). Certainly one of the goals of building human capital is to provide people with some kind of formal recognition of new knowledge and skills wherever possible.

IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

As the earlier part of this literature review establishes: extreme personal and family pressures are impacting on the health including mental health of many people in rural communities. The capacity of individuals to collaborate constructively with others to achieve goals and innovative solutions is dependent on their physical and mental health. Individual and community capacity building efforts need to identify ways of contributing to alleviation of these stressors and to find ways of connecting people with formal services and to social networks to improve overall health and wellbeing.

LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

'Learning communities' is a term now widely used to refer to the ability of communities to use knowledge and skills to play an active role in charting their own destinies. This contrasts with a belief that change will only come through initiatives undertaken by governments, or of waiting for commodity prices to improve (Black et al, 2000).

Leadership is an important human resource and thus, the need to create opportunities for increasing local leadership skills and experience.

INCREASING SOCIAL CAPITAL, COLLECTIVE EFFICACY AND SOCIAL COHESION

There is general acceptance in the literature that there are some similarities between the experiences of communities affected by climate variability, including drought and those that experience natural disasters such as bushfires. A number of studies show how communities themselves are central to the recovery process. Generally 'recovery' from the devastation whether following an emergency or, in the case of drought, long term degradation, is best achieved "when the affected community is able to exercise a high degree of self-determination". Moore et al argue that the capacity of communities to be actively involved in recovery is associated with their levels of social capital, collective efficacy and social cohesion (Moore et al., 2004). Understanding the meaning of these concepts (which are often grouped together under the overarching term: social capital) is important for building community capacity (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005).

SOCIAL CAPITAL

While various understanding of social capital exist most refer to the social connections, networks, norms and trust that enable participants to work together to pursue shared objectives. Cox adds another element in describing social capital as the "factor which allows collective action in the public sphere and for the common good"(Cox, 1997:4).

Social capital is viewed by many as critical for capacity building (Putnam, 2000). A "collaborative and engaged community" is more likely to facilitate collective action as it ensures that "people have the confidence to invest in collective activities, knowing that others will do so too" (Pretty, 2003, in Miller & Buys, 2008). Unlike fear based approaches to sustainability which use reprimands and penalties the social capital approach seeks to develop a genuine commitment to sustainable behaviours as the norm. Pretty and Ward (2001) demonstrate through case studies, for example, that

social capital within rural communities in the Third World predicts higher financial yields and sustainable solutions to local development problems thus preventing the degradation and overuse of natural resources (in Miller & Buys, 2008).

Social capital also provides an indicator of both community wellbeing and the community's capacity to initiate and manage social change. Communities with high 'stocks" of social capital are considered to be better at engaging, communicating, cooperating and problem solving (Cohen & Prusak, 2001 in Miller & Buys, 2008). The relevance of strengthening networks and trust at the local level is obvious for the rural sector as it battles economic and social decline (Alston, 2002b).

THE SYNERGY MODEL OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

One particular framework for thinking about social capital, the 'synergy' model, is particularly useful for the MBDI evaluation framework. It provides a rationale for the activities of professional staff and rural service officers in Centrelink which

- link people into <u>existing</u> networks, thus strengthening social capital.
- enable the <u>creation of new</u> networks through community development activities. (Apart from providing another opportunity to decrease isolation and provide personal support to individuals, new groups open up the potential for increasingly sophisticated problem solving)

Three elements of the synergy model are considered in more detail here. They are: 'bonding' networks with family and friends, 'intra community bridging' to other networks and 'linking' to sources of formal power (Healy, Hampshire, & Ayres, 2004; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

BONDING NETWORKS

These informal networks which refer to the connections that people have with family and close friends are important because they help people 'get by' and deal with everyday life. Considering the serious impacts of drought on marriages and families the

relevance of actions which encourage and enable people to improve relationships with people close to them is an obvious first step to individual and community capacity building.

Individuals first have to find a way to 'get by' in their day to day lives, including in their intimate relationships with immediate family and close friends before they are in a position to use their individual skills, knowledge and other personal attributes (their human capital) for the greater public good.

BRIDGING NETWORKS

Intra-community bridging refers to the networks within a particular community or across the borders of local communities within regions which provide a basis for shared identification and support (Healy, Hampshire, & Ayres, 2004). 'Bridging' networks offer the possibility of increased access to the resources and other opportunities of other groups. These are especially important to disadvantaged groups because they can provide new information, knowledge and contacts to deal with adverse circumstances that are outside the scope of family members and close friends. They have been called, ties that help extend people's capacity to 'get ahead', rather than just 'get by' (Healy, Hampshire, & Ayres, 2004).

In the disaster recovery literature, which has much to offer capacity building in communities affected by climate variability, there are numerous examples of people coming together with others they did not know before, to organise community events and activities. These new group activities were effective in providing social and emotional support to each other and in the provision of information to assist in critical decision making (Camilleri et al., 2007; Hutton, 2001; Maguire & Hagan, 2007; Mathbor, 2007)

LINKING WITH GOVERNMENT AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

'Linking' social capital - which refers to networks to powerful formal institutions such as government and non-government agencies is important for social and economic development and can assist in enhancing the overall level of trust in governance

systems (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000 and Cattell, 2001 in Healy et al, 2004; Healy, Hampshire, & Ayres, 2003;).

Within the Murray Darling Basin context 'linking social capital' refers to directly engaging with government officials, joining political advocacy groups set up to lobby for additional resources and planning decisions, working in partnership with the non government sector and/or business to create new structures and new possibilities. Direct access to and positive interactions with powerful institutions can provide a sense of renewed hope, efficacy and optimism for the future.

COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

The concept of 'collective efficacy' captures the link between the degree of mutual trust in a community (social capital) and residents willingness to voluntarily act for the public good of that particular community (Moore et al., 2004). Volunteering, particularly, appears to be important on many levels, not just for the additional resources it provides the community.

Volunteering can also give people an opportunity to connect with others and to reinforce their sense of belonging and self-worth in difficult times. It can help transform 'victim-hood' into empowerment, thereby creating a positive basis for resilience. This was, for example, particularly the case in the Canberra community after the 2003 bushfires where so many people had not previously required the assistance of formal services (Camilleri et al., 2007).

Activities which increase the willingness and motivation of people to volunteer and provide them with opportunities to do so are clearly relevant for the MDBI. As we have shown previously in this literature review levels of civic participation, self help and volunteering are under threat in rural communities suffering the long term impacts of drought.

SOCIAL COHESION

Social capital and collective efficacy, however, do not always result in positive outcomes for all, as they may lead to the exclusion or discrimination of others and/ or may focus on self interest or the interests of the majority. For example there are warnings in the natural resource management literature that local places can suffer from parochialism, elitism, and polarisation which can restrain environmental improvement. Referring to the politics of community in the Murray-Darling Basin, Boully & Dovers, (2002, p.106) argue 'there is no such thing as a catchment or basin community, but rather a highly complex, interacting set of communities' (p.106)

For societies to be truly cohesive there must also be purposeful efforts to reduce existing disparities and inequalities, work with vulnerable groups and prevent social exclusion (Berger-Schmitt 2000). The concept of social cohesion is concerned with the reduction of social disparities, inequalities, breaks and cleavages (Stone & Hughes, 2002 in T. Vinson, 2004). Social cohesion refers to the processes by which individuals have the desire to live together in some degree of harmony.

In the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's "*Australia's Welfare 2005*" social cohesion is defined as 'the connections and relations between societal units such as individuals, groups (and) associations' (Berger-Schmitt 2000:2, following McCracken 1998); it is the 'glue' that holds communities together. Cohesiveness is created from connections based on a shared sense of belonging and attachment, similar values, trust and a sense of 'social solidarity' (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005).

Tony Vinson, in his most recent study of place based disadvantage (*Dropping off the Edge*) identifies key indicators for levels of social cohesion as:

- Volunteerism
- Membership of local groups
- Group action to improve the 'community'
- Feel safe walking in the neighbourhood
- Agree people can be trusted

- Attendance at local community events
- Feeling valued by society (Vinson, 2007)

FINANCIAL CAPITAL

Financial capital refers to money or instruments of credit for investment and speculation and primarily consists of money that is used for investment into the community rather than for individual consumption. Individuals generate financial capital through salary and wages, earnings on investments, or loans. It also refers to the financial resources available to invest in community capacity building, to underwrite businesses development, to support civic and social entrepreneurship, and to accumulate wealth for future community development. Some examples of the way the MDBI increases the financial capital of a community is through their efforts to increase financial stability and workforce participation (Black & Hughes, 2001; Butler, Flora, Emery, Bregendahl, & Bregendahl, 2006)

Current discussions about capacity building are typically led from narrow perspectives that separately address specific environmental issues or social issues concerned with one of the "forms of capital". In reality, the interconnected issues of loss or decline in communities require consideration of not single, but multiple forms of capital and the relationships between them (Beeton, 2006). For example, leadership training (increasing human capital) might impact on financial capital as leaders use their skills to acquire funds and better manage funds. Social capital might be increased as people who have participated in leadership programs develop new bonds among themselves and bridges to new groups. The same leadership course might then increase political capital by providing information about how the system work; it could then help people develop links to sources of political power (Butler, et al, 2006).

All of these positive impacts can therefore be associated with Centrelink's efforts to link people with new knowledge and skills such as leadership training. Also it can be argued that providing people with sufficient income (financial capital) to enable them to attend

a breakfast seminar to meet businessmen and women (bridging social capital) may lead to increased opportunities for workforce participation (financial capital).

GOVERNMENTS ROLE IN BUILDING INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY – JOINED UP POLICY AND JOINED UP SERVCE DELIVERY

The 'synergy model' of social capital mentioned above is so called because it extends the notion of family, neighbourhood and community networks to include the relationships with public agencies (including both government and non government organisations). 'Synergy' in this sense implies connections between organized residents of disadvantaged communities and the officials and staff of public and private institutions (such as Centrelink).

Weak synergy is said to exist when governments limit their role to the supply of a basic framework for private action and to the delivery of goods that compliment the inputs of the private sector. Strong synergy suggests embeddedness; public officials share social ties and trust with the community across the public/private divide (Warren, Thompson, & Saegert, 1999).

This latter notion of government's role in community capacity building is consistent with the philosophical work of Anna Yeatman who claims that it is the role of central governments to enhance the capabilities of all individuals and that in doing so they should not attempt to do this alone; they should form primary partnerships with other institutions:

> Welfare cannot be approached as though it stands on its own. It needs to be seen as one component of the interlocking systems of health, education, welfare, housing and employment (Yeatman, 2000)p.7

It is the practical reality of how governments actually use their considerable human, financial and technical resources to stimulate jobs, improve skills and training, renew physical environments, enhance social relationships, through joined up service delivery that is the question to which we now turn in this literature review.

WHY JOIN UP SERVICES?

In recent years, in other contexts such as disaster recovery, suicide prevention, and the prevention of child abuse and neglect there has been a growing interest in the role of government in facilitating "joined up service delivery" to address complex problems that are clearly not the responsibility of any one agency or sector. The principle of a 'whole of government' approach to public administration has been called

> essential for the Australian Public Service to face the governance challenges of the 21st century (Dr Peter Shergold in Preface to Commonwealth of Australia, 2004a).

The 2004 Management Advisory Committee (MAC) Report *"Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia's Priority Challenges"* defines the notion of 'whole of government' in the Australian Public Service (APS) as:

> public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to particular issues. Approaches can be formal and informal. They can focus on policy development, program management and service delivery (Commonwealth of Australia, 2004).

The distinguishing characteristic of whole of government approaches is the emphasis on objectives shared across organisational boundaries. The concept is not new; coordination, as a policy outcome, has been a longstanding feature of Australian public administration, with three main types of whole of government activity integral to the approach:

- between Australian government agencies
- between different levels of government
- between the public, private, non-profit and community sectors (Commonwealth of Australia, 2004).

'Joined up' service delivery is known by many names in the literature, including 'cross sectoral partnerships', 'collaborative practice', and 'service integration'. The huge

literature that has developed in recent years on these approaches claim that goals can be best accomplished by agencies coming together to actively work on accomplishing a broad common mission. Human capital (such as leadership) and social capital (trust and networks) are clearly identified in the literature as essential elements of successful joined up service delivery (Billett, Clemans, & Seddon, 2005).

People and agencies 'join up' to form partnerships for a number of reasons including finding better ways to:

- deliver coordinated packages of services to individuals or organizations
- tackle local community or regional issues across a number of different sectors, for example health, housing , social services and education
- minimize the impact of fragmented local service delivery and rigid bureaucracy often resulting from shifts in local and national agendas (Billett et al, 2005).

There are an increasing array of new policy initiatives at the local and state levels that are based on the principle of cross-sectoral partnerships between the public, the private and the civil sectors[2]. These new initiatives focus on what Reddel calls 'management by negotiation and horizontal networks, policy learning and organic organisational forms rather than traditional methods of hierarchical command and control or market models' (Reddel, 2004:137). The question in relation to the Australian Government's role in community capacity building can be framed as: how can governments move from traditional 'command and control' approaches towards new forms of governance that involve the pooling of resources with external partners at the local level towards a shared goal of increasing individual and community capacity to solve problems?

PLACE BASED SERVICING AND JOINED UP SERVICE DELIVERY

It is helpful to refer to the 'place' and 'interests' based notions of community that may be of relevance to the focus of Murray Darling Basin Initiative activities .

LOCAL NOTIONS OF 'PLACE BASED'

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[2] (http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/getting_started/; http://www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au/)

Most definitions of 'community' refer to social interaction within a geographic area and where people have goals or norms in common (Black & Hughes, 2001, p. 4). Place can refer to a local neighbourhood, a particular region, a landscape or a nation. Certainly communities of place are usually considered geographical locations or physical spaces and it has been generally argued that place based initiatives focusing on local problems are likely to be more meaningful to the community and provide greater motivation to address local issues (Brunckhorst & Reeve, 2006; Lane & McDonald, 2005 in Harrington, et al, 2008).

SERVICES DIRECTED AT COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

The term 'community' has also been used to describe groups of people who engage in a particular purpose, task or function together regardless of whether they live in the same locality. This shared activity or function may relate to work, sport, education, entertainment or it may be defined in relation to particular characteristics of the group such as ethnicity, age. This would include amongst other things gender and religion. Black and Hughes (2001) refer to the creation of communities by a "particular intersection of history that creates and sustains a group of people" (p.4).

An excellent example of the kind of activities which recognise the importance of 'communities of interest', building knowledge and skills and increasing social networks is the current MDBI project which brings farmers and businessmen together for social dinners in a range of different geographical locations on a regular basis. The purpose of these events meets multiple goals that are of direct relevance to the purpose of the MDBI, for example:

- linking businessmen and farmers form diverse practices (dry land and irrigated / large and small business) to enable discussions that might lead farmers to diversify or incorporate other forms of farming or business practices.
- It also provides an opportunity to deliver information (leading to increased knowledge) about mental health care and resilience.

- Furthermore it provides opportunities for new friendships and peer support to increase health and wellbeing.

Communities are probably best defined subjectively as 'the group with which one identifies and which provides one with a particular sense of identity" (Black and Hughes, 2001, p.4). The advantages of this definition is that it is reflects the relationships and patterns of communication that are important to people and that communication and belonging are not necessarily specific to particular localities (Black and Hughes, 2001).

Research conducted within Centrelink in recent years is particularly relevant to the examination of why and how agencies join up services to deliver complex policy outcomes. The key elements of this research will be discussed in some detail here because they are directly relevant to the program logic which underpins the MDBI .

CENTRELINK RESEARCH ON CROSS SECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR JOINED UP SERVICES

In 2003 Centrelink became interested in how it could improve participation outcomes for 'customers' who faced significant barriers to employment. A study involving in depth interviews with 25 managers was undertaken to explore the nature of successful partnering activities in local communities. This study led to the Centrelink's current community engagement model which is outlined in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan adopted by the Murray Darling Basin Initiative.

Participants were asked a number of questions about partnering activities with other government agencies, the non government sector, business, schools and other community groups such as clubs, sporting bodies and local charities (Winkworth, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006).

The majority of managers who participated in the research articulated the importance of working across sectors with other agencies to 'build the bridges' necessary for personal and skill development, training and volunteering options for people who have

barriers to employment, or for whom employment opportunities are not available in their local communities. Most managers specifically referred to the 'transition' or 'bridging role' that is made possible for customers with barriers to participation through partnerships with other service providers (Winkworth, 2004).

SHARING FIANCIAL, PHSYSICAL, SOCIAL AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES

One finding from the 2003 research was the role that the Centrelink could play in reducing exclusion and building community capacity by sharing its extra-ordinary capital with others. This not only includes financial capital that is injected into local communities every week in the form or income support (and, more recently the range of payments associated with the drought) it also includes the extensive physical, human and social capital which is contained within and generated by the Commonwealth Service Delivery agency. Customer service centres and contact points in Rural Australia are an integral part of local communities. They have substantial public assets (staff, expertise, volunteers, information technology, buildings, and social networks). The following is a pictorial version of possible resources that can be shared with local communities to build capacity and increase social inclusion (Winkworth, 2005b)p. 101
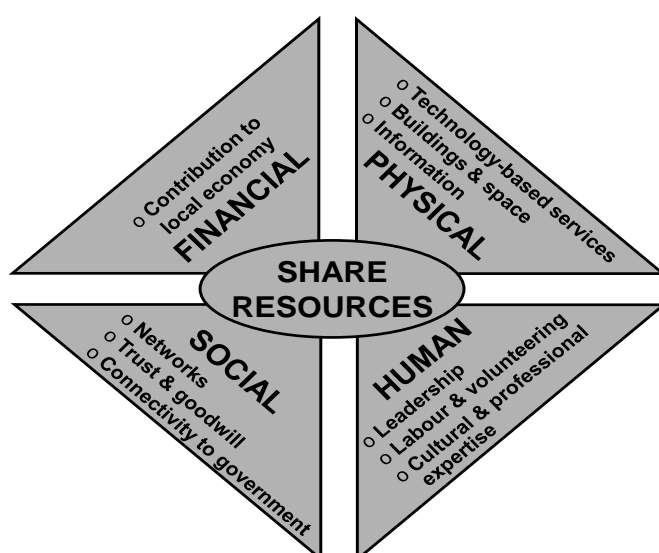

Figure 3 : Sharing resources

Figure 2: Sharing Resources (Winkworth, 2004, 2006).

In view of the importance of resource sharing for capacity building a reasonable question to include in an evaluation of the MBDI could be: To what extent is Centrelink sharing its resources or 'capital' with local communities to help build capacity?

HOW DO GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY AGENCIES JOIN UP WITH OTHER SERVICES AND THE 'COMMUNITY'?

This section draws on the above research already undertaken within Centrelink and other literature on integrated service delivery. It seeks to open up discussion about the kinds of activities professional staff and rural services officers in the MBDI might undertake to contribute to joined up policy and service delivery.

JOINING UP WITH WHOM?

Joined up policy and service delivery refers to working together across functions, institutions and across professions/ vocational groups.

Across functions

> "Joining up" across functions can mean working across the different agencies which focus in different functions. Within the MDB context there is an impetus for example to engage in activities which blur the boundaries between health, education, employment, income support, community services and the environment

Across institutions

This may involve a number of different institutions that interact with individuals, families and communist such as:

- Government service providers (that is, across jurisdictions such as local, state and commonwealth government agencies)

- The not for profit providers (for example: church based, secular, local government funded services such as meals on wheels)
- The for profit organizations (such as service providers, social enterprises, local business, large corporations and corporate philanthropic organisations)
- Public institutions (such as schools, child care centres, churches, hospitals, libraries) (Winkworth, 2004)

Across professional groups

Joined up service delivery also means working across different professional or vocational areas of specialization. This has not always been easy to do. Although there are clearly benefits in developing specialist knowledge, professional groups (for example, social workers and psychologists) often become defined by what makes them distinctive rather than what brings them together (Frost, 2005; Frost, Robinson, & Anning, 2005). Having distinctive knowledge means the risk that professionals who concentrate on their own specialization in isolation from others are unable to appreciate the many and varied life situations of service users.

There is a danger that professionals become focused on the survival of the professional group including the development of structures to protect and galvanise the group rather than on the development of structures that are centred on the best interests of service users. Friedson claims professionalisation can result in domination, authority and control rather than collegiate behaviour (Freidson, 1986) whereas collaborative or 'joined up' practice depends on recognition by different professional groups of their interdependence and that there are 'grey zones' where expertise may overlap (Winkworth & McArthur, 2007). Within the context of the MBDI there are good reasons for social workers, psychologists and rural service officers to work closely together and to work with other groups such as teachers, doctors and health workers, child care and family support workers.

WHERE DOES JOINED UP SERVICE DELIVERY BEGIN AND END?

One reason why successful partnerships are sometimes difficult to define and evaluate is that they are often open ended systems that link up individuals and organizational units, rather than structures that are composed of finite and definable membership. It can be difficult to identify the boundaries of a partnership because they frequently operate through individuals bringing various agencies together (Griffin & Curtin, 2007).

Rather than identifying and describing fixed partnerships a more useful way to understand the effectiveness of programs in achieving joined up service delivery is to consider specific goals of partnering behaviour towards an ultimate goal.

These broad behaviours or 'elements' of joined up services and the outcomes they seek to achieve are defined in Centrelink's Model for Community Engagement (Figure 3). In the case of the MDBI the ultimate goal has been identified as "positive and responsive outcomes for service and support in the Murray Darling Basin" (Stakeholder Engagement document, 2008) however, it is important to note that conceptually, these are not really linear steps, nor are they really a hierarchy in terms of the value they represent.
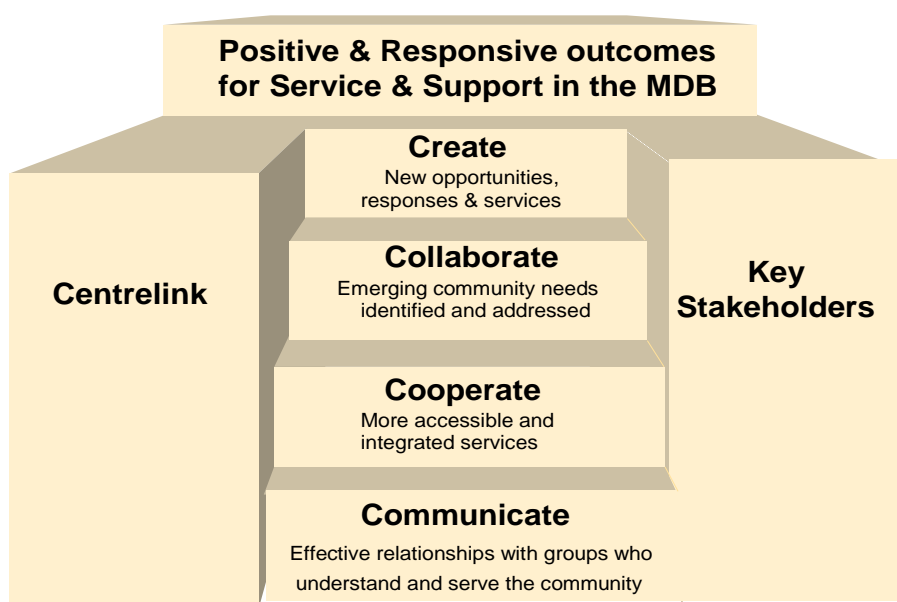

Figure 3 Centrelink's Community Engagement Model (Stakeholder Engagement document)

THE KEY ELEMENTS OF JOINED UP SERVICES

The above model was developed following 2003 research which analysed Centrelink's database of community engagement activities and 25 in depth interviews with Centrelink managers about how and why they developed partnerships with local service providers. We now examine in more detail the meaning of the broad elements of the model which we argue can be applied to government's role in the MDBI and more generally in cross- sectoral service delivery which seeks to increase social inclusion.

COMMUNICATION TO ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The partnership literature generally supports the notion that 'communication' and 'networking' is the basis of all partnership work. To develop the relationships and networks necessary to work together for people in local communities service deliverers first need to seek out the advice of those who understand local people and the issues they confront. This goes beyond the technical mapping of local demographics, although this too is important; it means strategically targeting community groups, and state and local governments who have long established funding relationships with these groups. Through establishing these relationships and networks government service deliverers are better able to understand local issues and the potential in community groups to help address these issues.

Examples of how Centrelink can build relationships with other service providers include:

- attending interagency meetings,
- volunteering
- fundraising in local communities alongside other service providers,
- being represented on local Boards,
- hosting open days and

- information sessions about Centrelink service options

COOPERATION BETWEEN GROUPS TO MAKE EXISTING SERVICES MORE ACCESSIBLE

The everyday working relationships between government service deliverers and other service deliverers who work with the same groups of service users should lead to more cooperative and coordinated initiatives. The purpose of working together cooperatively is to make existing services more accessible. Some examples of how this is done include:

- *co-locating* services (eg: tenancy support officers, youth workers, family support agencies visiting government offices on regular days);
- *outservicing* customers within state government and community organizations such as local schools, juvenile justice centres, boarding houses, alcohol and drug services; visiting farmers at homes to expedite payments and the drought bus is an excellent example of outservicing,
- *encouraging* local groups to use government facilities as meeting places (such as offering to provide a meeting room for women's groups so that they can form social connections and can be provided with relevant information from speakers)
- *bringing together* relevant service agencies, including government service deliverers, into a central and single location to offer a broad range of assistance;
- *conducting joint information seminars* and distribution of service information (such as an information session with other local services to provide information about the need for a child care provider in the town, or, Centrelink working together with Mental Health to produce a brochure about the impacts of drought on children and young people;
- *making special arrangements* for vulnerable groups, for example: an alternative to queuing for farmers who are reluctant to go to a Centrelink office

These relationships, which focus on coordinating existing services, form the basis for more complex partnerships because they inform potential partners about the capacity

of government and community providers to work together. They are vital to establishing credibility.

PARTNERSHIPS WHICH INVOLVE COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE EXISTING SERVICES AND, ADDRESS SERVICE GAPS.

Collaborative partnerships are formed to work on significant system wide problems faced by service users. These improve existing services, address service gaps and tailor services to individual circumstances. They also actively work to reduce the likelihood of unintended negative consequences of services such as breaching or debt creation. They involve pooling information, time and resources to create more responsive ways of delivering services. Some of the partnership activities involving multiple service providers (mental health, drug and alcohol services, probation and parole, the courts and Centrelink) working together to address severe barriers faced by ex prisoners, or problems encountered by early school leavers, are good examples of collaborative partnerships.

Within the MDBI context a good example is Centrelink working with other service providers to find a child care provider for the town so that women can attend self help groups, education and employment. Another example is the *Riverina Communities – Building our Future Together* project, which aims to build community access to support services and develop community capacity in hard times. In this project professional working parties examine community needs and difficulties and will conduct workshops to develop community action plans.

PARTNERSHIPS TO ACTIVELY CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESPONSES AND SERVICES: CENTRELINK'S "ENABLING" ROLE.

Cross sectoral partnerships at the 'creative' level involve more broad ranging strategies to address emerging community issues, sometimes in response to a crisis (such as the closure of a major industry or a natural disaster). These kinds of 'joined up' initiatives

engage people all over the community (such as local sporting clubs, sporting facilities, churches, business, health etc) not only traditional welfare services. They reflect the assumption that many different groups have a shared commitment to and investment in responding to issues which affect their communities.

Good examples of this level of joined up service delivery include the *Riverina Communities – Building our Future Together* project which is resulting in efforts for example, to set up a community cooperative at a local café, seeking a grant for a concrete skate board park, and joining with a group of parents to set up an evening movies night for teenagers at the local school (Personal Communication, Centrelink, 2008).

Another example of creating new opportunities is an activity, previously mentioned, which is designed to bring farmers and business people together to talk "men's business". These activities provide a number of new opportunities to build human and social capital and involve partnership between Centrelink, service providers and wider community groups which are integral to building individual and community capacity building and ultimately to increasing social inclusion (Personal Communication, Centrelink, 2008).

CENTRELINK AND PLACE BASED SERVICES TO INCREASE SOCIAL INCLUSION

Centrelink is operating in an environment that increasingly requires more than the neutral delivery of government services. Social and economic pressures are transforming communities: urban, rural and regional. The vitality of these communities depends not only on their ability to maintain employment and income it also depends on 'the ability of local people to anticipate change, reframe problems, mobilise their community, communicate widely, think strategically and make informed decisions(Cavaye 1999:1)'. This is the essence of community capacity, the 'ability, organisation, attitudes, skills and resources that communities have to improve their economic and social situation (Cavaye 1999:1).' The relationships that representatives

of government build with members of local communities and the personal trust engendered by these relationships are critical to this process (Cavaye, 1999).

This trust and the networks that are enabled through the development of consultative, collaborative and participatory processes are important elements in the building of social capital for people who are disadvantaged and also for those who represent them. To achieve this trust government service deliverers, often in their capacity as local leaders, must be able to fulfill the expectations that are naturally conferred on them: that they represent government and can therefore provide a policy conduit between government and the 'community'.

To do this successfully it is argued that there needs to be increased recognition that building individual and community capacity can be best achieved by those who work and reside in communities, and who interact daily with the public (Cavaye, 2003). Policy feedback loops are required if government service deliverers are to take best advantage of opportunities to develop the trust and social capital that are proven contributors to economic development. Public agencies such as Centrelink are in an ideal position to use the trust they foster with other government, not-for-profits and the wider civil society to work collaboratively, share resources and increase the ability of local communities to respond to rapid change.

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Appendix A   Current concepts and terminology related to capacity building

Author and publication date	Concept
Women's Health Victoria (2003)	Capacity building involves the development of sustainable skills, organisational structures, resources and commitment to improvement in health and other sectors.
Australian government agency (2002)	Capacity building relates to a range of activities by which individuals, groups and organisations improve their capacity to achieve sustainable natural resource management. Capacity in this context includes awareness, skills, knowledge, motivation, commitment and confidence.
NSW Health (2001)	Literature on capacity building describes it as an approach to development that builds independence. It increases the range of people, organisations and communities who are able to address problems, and in particular problems which arise out of social inequity and exclusion. The definition used in health promotion is the development of sustainable skills, structures, resources and commitment to improvement in health and other sectors to prolong and multiply health gains many times over.
Yarram Health (2002)	The Alberton Project is a community redevelopment program aimed at building community capacity in a holistic context. That is, to enhance social, spiritual, environmental, cultural, and economic values, leading to a confident, vibrant and energetic community exhibiting an outstanding community lifestyle.
Department of Natural Resources and Environment (2002)	Community capacity building is a process of change management which allows residents to direct change instead of being overwhelmed by it. It enables the development and implementation of agreed community projects, encourages the development of new skills and helps obtain further resources to achieve community goals. It involves building and strengthening the relationships between individuals, associations, institutions and businesses. The community's assets are identified and mobilised to achieve a common vision. The community then identifies the projects and actions required to implement that vision, and its capacity to manage and implement change grows.
Napier (2002)	... build the capacity of communities with a view to creating communities that are participatory, empowered and as a result sustainable.
Victorian government agency (2002)	Social capacity is the community's ability to utilise their human and social resources (capital) to scope and define their collective issues, undertake collaborative action and manage change. Social capacity building focuses on enhancing genuine community engagement in all aspects of natural resource management
European Centre for Development Policy Management (2003)	Capacity development has to do with the process of change and adaptation at a variety of levels, including the individual, the functional, the organisational, the multi-organisational and the institutional.
Ballantyne, Labelle and Rudgard (2000)	Capacity development is the process by which individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and societies develop abilities (individually and collectively) to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives. More specifically, it is a way for groups or organisations to increase their ability to contribute to poverty alleviation.
Thomson and Pepperdine (2003)	1. Capacity could be described as the ability to understand and deal with the enabling and constraining elements, dimensions and issues that drive the process of capital accumulation and decline (in all its forms).
	2. ... our regional investigations have confirmed that capacity is very much about the skills and knowledge of individuals and their perceptions and values, the social networks and relations, including feelings of trust and reciprocity and support and cooperation within and between institutions and between individuals. However, issues of governance, administration, consistency, continuity, and the availability and accessibility of financial and other resources, are also important. In addition, the physical and natural capital of the region can play a large role in determining the level of capital of other forms required to successfully manage riparian lands.
European Centre for Development Policy Management (2003)	The concept of capacity has to do with the competence or the capability to perform or to produce some sort of developmental value.

Land (2000)	1. Capacity is the ability of individuals, organisations, or societies to set and implement development objectives on a sustainable basis. 2. Capacity building is a continuous process by which individuals, groups, institutions, organisations and societies enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner.
European Centre for Development Policy Management (2003)	Core capacities are themselves made of bundles of connected functional capacities or competencies. Capacity thus implies capabilities at different levels, many of which are combined and interconnected—for example, the ability to learn and adapt. It is this ability to combine or at least coordinate different abilities into an overall core capacity that makes the real difference in performance.
Thomson and Pepperdine (2003)	Capital is often thought of as a stock of assets or resources that can only be enhanced with investment and have an assessable value. Five types of capital are often cited in the 'social capacity for [natural resource management]' literature—natural, social, human, physical and financial capital.
World Bank (2002)	Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society: it is the glue that holds them together.
Putnam (2000)	Whether the specific suggestions I have made for institutional reform are persuasive or not is less important than the possibility that we may have a national debate about how to make our institutions more social capital friendly. In the end, however, institutional reform will not work—indeed it will not happen—unless you and I, along with our fellow citizens, resolve to become reconnected with our friends and neighbours.
Bullen and Onyx (1998)	Social capital is the raw material of civil society. It is created from the myriad of everyday interactions between people. It is not located within the individual person or within the social structure, but in the space between people.
Cox (1995)	Social capital refers to the processes between people which establish networks, norms, social trust and facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.
Putnam (1994)	Social capital [refers to] those features of social organisation which facilitate cooperation for mutual benefit, enhancing a community's ability to benefit from investments and physical and human capital.
European Centre for Development Policy Management (2003)	Performance has to do with the way and the degree to which actors at the personal, functional, organisational or multi-organisational level deliver services or produce some sort of developmental value, either externally or internally. Performance is not about potential or institutionalisation or organisational design or motivation or capability or competence or organisational change. It is about production and achievement and accomplishment. In this sense, performance is the true test of the existence of capacity.