

STATE of SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Trends and Issues 2006 Update

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to review the provision of community services and social support in South Australia in relation to the State Strategic Plan (SSP).

Whilst many of the objectives in the Plan have synergies with community services the most salient is the "Expanding Opportunity" objective with its seventeen associated targets.

Expanding Opportunity

The priority of the "Expanding Opportunity" objective is to ensure South Australians are able to create and use opportunities that build on their talents. It has a focus on leadership in education, establishing foundations in early childhood and building basic skills in primary school. It also has a priority in retaining senior students at school so they can make the transition to further education, work and community life. This objective also includes priority targets related to "Aboriginal Well-being", "Income Inequality", "Homelessness", "Disability" and "Housing Stress". Many of the targets are related tightly to the State Governments social inclusion agenda. This objective and the others in the SSP were the subject of a recent major report by the State Strategic Plan Audit Committee (SSPAC 2006).

Table 1 provides the SSPAC (2006) progress ratings for the seventeen targets associated with this objective in the first two years of the plan.

Table 1 Expanding opportunity

N	Target	Score
T6.01	Aboriginal Wellbeing	4
T6.02	Aboriginal Employment in the Public Sector	3
T6.03	Income Inequality	4
T6.04	Homelessness	5
T6.05	Disability	1
T6.06	Affordable Housing	5
T6.07	Housing Stress	5
T6.08	Junior Primary Class Sizes	1
T6.09	Premier's Reading Challenge	1
T6.10	Primary Education – Literacy and Numeracy	1
T6.11	Middle Schooling – Literacy and Numeracy	2
T6.12	Senior Secondary Schooling – Leaving Age	2
T6.13	Senior Secondary Schooling – Completion of Year 12	3
T6.14	Regional Education	2
T6.15	Non-school Qualifications	2
T6.16	University Participation	2
T6.17	TAFE Participation	5

1 = achieved – currently at or better than the target level

2 = on track to meet the target in the time frame

3 = the target is unlikely to be met in the time frame

4 = little or no/negative movement has been made on the target

5 = no data or no new data available or measurement is problematic

The SSPAC (2006) progress report on the State Strategic Plan suggests the target in regard to "Disability" has been achieved and is currently at or better than the target level. The Junior Education targets including the "Premier's Reading Challenge", "Junior Primary Class

Sizes” and “Primary Education – Literacy and Numeracy” have also been achieved and are currently at or better than the target level.

The Plan is on track in terms of the “Middle Schooling – Literacy and Numeracy” target, the “Secondary School – Leaving Age” target, “Regional Education”, “Non-school Qualifications” and “University Participation”. However, the report indicates that the targets for increasing “Secondary School - Completion of year 12” and “Aboriginal Employment in the Public Sector” are unlikely to be met in the time frame.

Little, no progress or negative progress appears to have been made in addressing the “Aboriginal Well-being” or “Income Inequality” targets. The SSPAC (2006) report indicates that Aboriginal life expectancy in South Australia actually declined by 1.5 years between 2002 and 2004, and the imprisonment rate for Aboriginal people increased marginally from 2003 to 2005 while non-Aboriginal imprisonment rates fell. Moreover, the incomes of the lowest income households in South Australia fell slightly from 2000-2001 to 2003 to 2004.

SSPAC (2006) suggests that insufficient data is available to assess progress in relation to the “Homelessness”, “Affordable Housing”, “Housing Stress” and “TAFE Participation” targets.

The only reliable source of data on “Homelessness” is the Census, which indicates that homelessness increased significantly in South Australia between 1996 and 2001. Data supplied to SSPAC (2006) by the Social Inclusion Unit indicates

that Social Inclusion programs or programs associated with the SIU housed 1012 homeless people in 2003. However it will be difficult to assess whether this effort has reduced homelessness in South Australia until the results of the 2006 Census are released.

Similarly no comprehensive data is available on the quantity of “Affordable Housing”. The Commonwealth Bank – HIA Affordability Index cited in SSPAC (2006) suggests that housing in Adelaide is more affordable than the national average but that affordability in South Australia has been declining over the last five years.

“TAFE Participation” appears to have improved in 2005 in South Australia after declining in 2003 and 2004 more steeply than the national average. However, this result was not considered by the State Strategic Plan Audit Committee to be sufficient evidence to move its rating for this target above the minimal 5 category (SSPAC 2006).

Spending Priorities on Community Services

SSPAC (2006) provides an overview of the how the “Whole of State” prioritises community services in accordance with the SSP. Data collected by the Grants Commission indicates how the South Australian Government prioritises community services in comparison with other States.

Table 2. State expenses by type of service – annual average proportion of total expenses for 2000-01 to 2004-05 (%)

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Education	22	22.1	22.4	21.4	21	22.4	20.5	16.3
Health	22.3	22.3	19.8	20.8	22.7	19.9	19.9	17.5
Welfare and Community Services	11.5	11.8	8.5	8.5	11.3	10.1	9.9	9.7
Public Order and Safety	9.6	8.6	8.9	9.1	9.3	7.9	9.9	8.9
Culture and Recreation	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.6	2.8	3.1	2	4.1
Services to Industry	2.3	2	6.3	4	3	3.7	1	6
Transport	11.3	9.1	10.2	7.9	6	5.2	3.7	3
Other	18.5	21.9	21.7	25.8	23.8	27.6	33.5	34.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Grants Commission Data 2006

Table 2 indicates that in the five year period to 2004-5 the SA Government spent roughly the equivalent proportion of total expenses on Welfare and Community Services as New South Wales and Victoria and more than other small States such as Western Australia and Tasmania on Health, Welfare and Community Services. SA underspent on Transport and Services to Industry compared with New South Wales, Victoria,

Queensland and Western Australia. These spending patterns suggest that the State has consistently prioritised spending on welfare and community services over other forms of expenditure.

Table 3 Expenditure on community services, South Australia 1999-2005, \$ millions.

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2004-05
Family and child services	80.3	108.0	103.7	109.2	105.7
Aged and disabled services	128.8	187.5	135.9	143.1	180.2
Homeless and general welfare	156.0	128.4	165.0	173.7	160.1
Total	365.0	423.9	404.6	426.1	445.9

Source: Commonwealth Grants Commission 2006

According to Commonwealth Grants Commission data expenditure on South Australia's community services has continued to increase in all key areas of social welfare over the last five years, including family and child services, aged and disabled services and homeless and general welfare. Rising expenditure has coincided with the improving state of the South Australian economy over the last five years and consequent increased revenue flows. General spending on community services rose steadily from \$365 million in 1999-00 to \$445 million in 2004-05.

These spending patterns are likely to be related to demand for community services in South Australia, which is driven by a before housing poverty rate higher than the national average, low household mean incomes and persistently high unemployment rates (SAAWG 2000). South Australia has the worst relative level of socio-economic disadvantage on the mainland (ABS 2004). South Australia rated 975.7 on the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage compared with a figure of 1,004.9 for Australia as a whole.

Table 4 Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage by all States and Australia

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	Australia
Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage	1,015.3	1,012.0	984.6	1,006.8	975.7	947.9	1,004.9

Source: ABS cat. no. 1379.0.55.001, released 19/03/04

The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage/Disadvantage is derived from Census data and measures social and economic conditions in a given region. Higher index scores indicate that a region has attributes such as higher proportions of people on high incomes or a highly skilled workforce. Conversely, low scores indicate a region has more people on low incomes and with fewer skills. South Australia's relatively low score on the Index of Relative Socio-economic disadvantage suggests demand for social support and community services is likely to be commensurately higher than in States with relatively higher scores.

Policy Conclusions

In summary, according to SSPAC (2006) the SSP is essentially on track in regard to "Disability", Junior Education targets, "Middle Schooling – Literacy and Numeracy", the "Secondary School – Leaving Age", "Regional Education", "Non-school Qualifications" and "University Participation". However, the report indicates that the targets for increasing "Secondary School Completion of Year 12" and "Aboriginal Employment in the Public Sector" are unlikely to be met in the time frame. Little, no progress or negative progress appears to have been made in addressing the "Aboriginal Well-being" and "Income Inequality" targets and insufficient data is available to

assess progress in relation to the "Homelessness", "Housing Affordability", "Housing Stress" and "TAFE Participation" targets. Other measures suggest the State continues to increase spending on community services relative to the need to address persistent poverty and higher than average levels of socio-economic disadvantage in South Australia.

References

ABS (2004), National Regional Profile, Australian Bureau of Statistics: cat. no. 1379.0.55.001.

Commonwealth Grants Commission (2006), various documents: <http://www.cgc.gov.au/> accessed August 20th, 2006.

SSPAC (2006), State Strategic Plan Audit Committee report, June, Government of SA.