

## Social Procurement – The Value Proposition

Rydges, 17 October 2014

### Welcome and acknowledgements

- I acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Jagera people, where we are meeting today, and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present. I acknowledge the other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people among us here today.
- I also acknowledge the people who want to work, many of whom are living with mental illness and drug and alcohol problems, their families and carers. The ideas here today can make such a difference in their lives.
- Thank you to the people who have brought this event together today, Localbuy, Social Procurement and ArcBlue

### About the Commission

- My role as Queensland's Mental Health Commissioner is to encourage people from across the community, the public sector and industry to come together to make the best use of their collective wisdom to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Queenslanders.
- That collective wisdom comes from both our professional lives as well as our life experiences
- Last week, we launched Queensland's Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan. This strategy provides the platform for a coordinated and concerted effort over the next five years.
- This is a plan for all Queenslanders, because in one way or another we are all affected — individually and as a community — by problems with mental health and substance misuse.
- It is a plan that is based on consultation across Queensland and endorsed by Cabinet. To be endorsed by Cabinet, means that heads of our public sector departments and our Ministers support it.

### The vision

***The Queensland mental health and drug and alcohol strategic plan has a vision for the future, an aspirational vision:***

- A healthy and inclusive community, ... where people experiencing mental health difficulties or issues related to substance use ... have a life with purpose ... and access to quality care and support ... focused on wellness and recovery, ... in an understanding, empathic and compassionate society.

It is worth noting that this is a much debated vision, almost every phrase has been contested and revised.

A few elements of that vision are particularly relevant to your discussions here today:

- a life with purpose
- focused on wellness and recovery
- in an understanding, empathic and compassionate society

*You can help us achieve this.*

## Outcomes

It has outcomes, with indicators and targets yet to be developed.

The outcomes we have articulated are based on those developed by a National Expert Reference Group and the National Drug Strategy 2010-2015. We haven't gone off and developed our own new and different set. We steal with style. We do not re-invent. It is a waste of time and resources.

One of the outcomes is:

- People with mental health difficulties or issues related to substance use have lives with purpose

One of the indicators proposed by the National Experts is:

- Improve employment rates of adults over 18 with mental illness and their carers

*You can help us achieve this.*

## Shared commitments to action

And it has commitments to ACTION

### Shared Commitment 4

The community sector plays a vital role as the primary providers of non-clinical services that support people with mental health difficulties and issues related to substance use to live well and participate in their community. A responsible, sustainable and cost-effective community sector is an essential component of an effective mental health, drug and alcohol system.

### How will this be achieved?

There are many ways this can be achieved but one of the avenues endorsed by government is:

- Investigating options to include social outcomes in procurement policies and processes to increase opportunities for community organisations to support people living with mental health difficulties or issues related to substance use.

### Who is responsible?

Leadership will be shared among key stakeholders including peak bodies and Queensland government agencies. The Queensland Mental Health Commission will coordinate activities implemented as part of this shared commitment to action.

*You can help us achieve this.*

## My hope for today

- We learn about activities that provide, or might provide, real work for people with mental health difficulties or issues related to substance use
- We realise that these examples are cost effective and are therefore consistent with government procurement policies
- We resolve to work together to develop strategies to grow and market more opportunities building on the examples we hear about today.
- We envisage a future where high achieving CEOs want to sponsor social enterprises and achieve social outcomes.

I know that social procurement is not just about improving outcomes for people with mental health and drug and alcohol problems – it is about improving the lives of all people who are marginalised in our workforce.

And we don't necessarily want special programs for people with mental health and drug and alcohol programs – we want programs that are inclusive and that make our communities and our workforces inclusive.

Because people with mental health and drug and alcohol problems are not a special group of people – they are part of the community, they could be you, me or families and friends. As a friend who is a paraplegic as the result of childhood polio once said to me:

- Don't forget, you are temporarily able bodied ...

## Why would businesses foster social enterprises?

- Many will do it because it is the right thing to do.
- Others will do it because it makes good business sense

I am sure that companies like Transfield, Thiess, NAB, Rio Tinto and Telstra would not be supporting social enterprises if it was bad for business.

There is a business case for employing people 'outside the box'<sup>1</sup> – and it is not just a business case that 'someone else' should employ people who might otherwise be on a disability pension or unemployment benefits.

Individual businesses benefit because it has been shown time and time again that:

1. People with disability have a very positive work attitude
2. They are less likely to leave thus reducing costs of turnover
3. And their employment can lead to a more positive work place culture
4. The number of OHS incidents for an employee with a disability is 6 times lower than that of an average employee and the number of workers compensation incidents is 4 times lower
5. Employees with disability have fewer sickness absences than the average employee

If you need more evidence to persuade your colleagues, I recommend you read the ACCI's publication "Employ Outside the Box"

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.acci.asn.au/getattachment/Research-and-Publications/Publications/Employ-Outside-the-Box/A5\\_EOTB\\_DisabilityFINAL\\_WEB.pdf.aspx](http://www.acci.asn.au/getattachment/Research-and-Publications/Publications/Employ-Outside-the-Box/A5_EOTB_DisabilityFINAL_WEB.pdf.aspx)

Where businesses have used a social procurement model the positive outcomes have been better economic and social outcomes for the community as well as improved community relations and employee engagement.

INSERT CASE STUDY NOT FOR PUBLICATION

### **What can government do?**

I am delighted that Queensland's government signed off to the statement:

- Investigating options to include social outcomes in procurement policies and processes

It is only one line in a 28 page document, but it has the potential to be one of the most powerful. It has the potential to bring innovation and local leadership to realising our vision of "a life with purpose". It expands responsibility for supporting mental health and wellbeing out of the hands of the health professions to the community and industry.

I am delighted that both Treasury and Public Works senior officials supported the inclusion of this statement and have expressed a personal commitment to demonstrating to public sector agencies that it is possible to include social outcomes within government procurement policies.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I must thank Luke Terry from our Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council for having the insight to propose that this action was included in our strategic plan. The role of the Advisory Council members is to provide advice and to help me influence change. Today's forum is a great start.

My on-going role is to prompt government if it is necessary but I am fairly confident that with the commitment already given, that will not be necessary.

Thank you to those individuals and businesses that have embraced social procurement because it is the right thing to do.

I wish you all well and look forward to helping you promote the on-going initiatives that are stimulated by today's forum.

ENDS