Editorial

Social inclusion is currently a priority of international social policy agendas, and a focus on the concept itself, and various applications under its umbrella, is warranted. The *Journal of Social Inclusion* was conceived by staff of the School of Human Services and Social Work at Griffith University in Queensland, Australia. The school is located on the Logan Campus, a geographic and social area of significant social disadvantage, and many of the staff are researching conceptual and applied aspects of social inclusion. Practitioners and scholars of the disciplines of Human Services and Social Work are well placed to lead such a development, as historically and contemporarily, these disciplines are engaged with various social practices promoting social inclusion. They are also concerned with issues that underline such practices as redressing social exclusion, social inequality, poverty, marginalisation, vulnerability, colonisation and oppression. Hence, the idea of creating a forum for the exchange of collective research findings and rigorous discussions about social inclusion within an international peer-reviewed journal was formulated.

In terms of scope, the journal invites social inclusion scholarship from a broad range of quarters – including human services, critical geography, psychology, sociology or indeed law. Additionally the journal has an emphasis on and will embrace submissions which are thematically, methodologically and philosophically divergent. With the technical support of the Research Content team, the decision was made to develop the journal in an electronic format to allow maximum accessibility for a wide readership. An Editorial Committee was formed, and an Editorial Advisory Board of Australian and international scholars was established. The journal is committed to publishing peer-reviewed papers as well as the providing the opportunity for a series of (non-refereed) commentaries around the social inclusion theme. The release of Issue 1 of the *Journal of Social Inclusion* comes after a significant journey to date and we are grateful for the contributions of so many supporters in reaching this point.

Why a focus on Social Inclusion?

As a concept to redress social exclusion, social inclusion has been a focus of international social policy agendas for over a decade. In Australia, the new Labor government elected in 2007, and subsequently in partnership with state jurisdictions, has initiated major social change strategies within a national Social Inclusion framework. Therefore, as a driver of social policy and enhanced economic productivity, as well as an imperative for social action, concepts of social inclusion themselves invite discussion and critique; and are worthy of scholarly attention. This new *Journal of Social Inclusion* seeks to provide a medium by which such a focus can be facilitated and rigorous discussion occur.

At a government level, the Australian Commonwealth government's "vision of a socially inclusive society is one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society."[1] A national Social Inclusion Board has been established and has outlined key principles and priorities supported by an intentional agenda of setting targets and outcome measurement.

These are stated as:

- *Supporting children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage* by providing health, education and family relationships services
- *Helping jobless families with children* by helping the unemployed into sustainable employment and their children into a good start in life
- *Focusing on the locations of greatest disadvantage* by tailoring place-based approaches in partnership with the community
- *Assisting in the employment of people with disability or mental illness* by creating employment opportunities and building community support
- *Addressing the incidence of homelessness* by providing more housing and support services
- *Closing the gap for Indigenous Australians* with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement and employment outcomes.[2]

Inclusion is a complex and multifaceted concept that is practised in various forms[3]. For social inclusion, some of these forms are *technical* and *practical,* whereby social change and enhanced economic productivity are sought through imagining new social possibilities, creating new opportunities and access, setting goals by shared decision making such as consultation and representation, redistributing or providing targeted resources to build capacity, measuring outcomes and providing evidence, as well as reporting back to the public and relevant interest groups. Social inclusion can also be sought from a *legislative* form, where legislation is utilised to protect vulnerable, marginalised and / or oppressed groups of people. Typically, rights-based legislation such as anti-discrimination legislation, along with social policies encompassing social justice principles, fall within these parameters.

Not so much contemplated are other moral considerations of inclusion beyond rights and common social justice frameworks; thereby posing questions of what 'would *ethical* forms of inclusion look like?' When moral and ethical aspects are considered, questions emerge about capacity for human flourishing. Identification of sustainers of exclusion and therefore structural barriers to inclusion (such as social, economic, political, legal and moral barriers) are identified, deconstructed and unravelled. Their relationship to power and orthodoxy are explored and their sovereign legitimacy within a society questioned. Identity constructions are reviewed; and emancipation is no longer premised upon the inclusion of outsiders to a pre-existing dominant (and dominated) context. Rather questions are posed about why such excluding contexts *should be* sustained, and what alternative considerations are necessary to achieve particular outcomes so that the human dignity of *all* is preserved and potential social, economic, political, legal and moral harms are minimised. It seems then, that in order for a social inclusion agenda to be effective and sustainable, a full range of considerations is not only important but imperative.

Introducing the Papers

This first issue contains papers written by various staff and students of the School of Human Services and Social Work of Griffith University. The papers have been triple peer-reviewed by national and international reviewers and represent the complex characteristics implicit within social inclusion, which, as stated above, cannot be

considered as a singular concept. Rather, discussions about social inclusion will encompass visionary, conceptual, practical and transformatory aspects; and these fascinating papers reflect such as a scope. They also highlight different forms of investment that are required within social inclusion agendas and present an astuteness to need beyond superficial assistance and analysis. Subsequent issues of the journal will, as a consequence of an open call for papers, present articles from a broadened field and geographical and situational locations.

It is appropriate to introduce this inaugural issue of the *Journal of Social Inclusion* with a paper highlighting one of the greatest challenges of contemporary Australian society in regard to a social inclusion agenda, that is of 'closing the gap' to reduce multiple forms of disadvantage for Indigenous Australians. *Ann Ingamells* presents an insightful case study "of a remote shire in Western Queensland [Australia] where indicators suggest better than usual socioeconomic outcomes for Aboriginal people." Ingamells proposes in the paper, supported by research within the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, that these better outcomes seem to be based upon the positive relationships of long term families of both settler and Indigenous cultures; representing the longstanding efforts of the Diamantina Shire residents. However, Ingamells reminds us that although such outcomes appear positive for all, they are still contingent on a context in which settler norms dominate. We are reminded then of the complexity of Social Inclusion aspirations, and indeed their shortfalls, when structural aspects remain suppressed and uncontested for a different vision, and how technicist approaches can dominate and restrict the possibilities of an agenda.

The second paper by *Stephen Larmar* "reports on the findings of a pilot study examining teacher perceptions of the Kids Hope Aus. program". This early intervention and prevention program which works with children at risk of social and academic disengagement, embraces a particular framework to ameliorate risks and prevent further harms to such children. Larmar reports on the findings of an evaluation of 188 teachers in Victoria, Australia, who have participated in the program. The findings revealed that the program as a "cogent intervention framework for fostering greater social inclusion and academic enhancement for young people that can be easily disseminated in regular school communities." Larmar's paper provides a timely example of an intentional, practical program to support children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage. It is important to evaluate different components of such an intervention; and how they are perceived to deliver positive outcomes. Knowing teachers' perceptions of efficacy is critical not only for the delivery and outcomes of this program; but also for achieving goals within a wider social policy agenda.

Gail Pritchard has prepared the third paper for this issue. She asks significant questions about why disabled teachers are in such short supply within education systems. Pritchard contends that not only are disabled people excluded from teaching professions; but also that a key reason for this phenomenon is the embedded exclusion of disabled people in higher education and academic settings. She argues that such exclusion both prevents professional opportunities for disabled people and denies the opportunity for a particular knowledge standpoint to be shared. As previously stated, an Australian Social Inclusion Priority is to assist in 'the employment of people with disability or mental illness by creating employment opportunities and building community support.' However, Pritchard's paper raises some fundamental concerns firstly about the relationship between education and disability, and opportunities that are either fostered or restricted; and then the consequences of such a relationship for the development of professional skills and vocational leadership for people with

disability. The interplay within education between the places of students and the opportunity to also 'teach' as a career, makes this an interesting paper in which restrictive goals of social inclusion in regard to people with disability are challenged, as is a vision for a more socially inclusive society.

The fourth paper 'Working with vulnerable primary school aged children and their families', written by *Gabrielle Le Bon* and *Jennifer Boddy*, is a review of the Australian literature on key principles, issues, and community level approaches. Le Bon and Boddy highlight "issues facing Australian primary school aged children and their families," and the paper also "examines approaches for working with those from diverse backgrounds who have varying health needs." Finally, recommendations for further research are presented. The authors argue that different influences on primary school aged children will have a direct bearing on their experiences of social inclusion in later life. Given the range of Social Inclusion Priorities encompassing this group of children, this review of the literature provides a timely contribution to policy makers and practitioners; and prompts us to consider and implement holistic practices for better and transformative social inclusion outcomes.

In the final paper, *Fiona Kumari Campbell* goes to the heart of Social Inclusion scholarship, taking us as readers into a necessary conceptual space of critique. Entitled 'Crippin' the Flâneur: Cosmopolitanism, and Landscapes of Tolerance', Campbell examines the trope of cosmopolitanism promoted in modern Western societies; and questions how 'spaces' for marginal people, such as people with disability, have been constructed and created. Further, she discusses the perspective of the 'disabled *flâneur*' who, in her words "ambivalently claims 'outsider-insidedness'". Finally, whilst Campbell initially focuses on disability, she then pertinently questions "social inclusion and the government of aversion through the deployment of tolerance." Through a discussion on Cosmopolitanism, Campbell exposes ways in which 'difference' within Western society has been conceptualised and organised resulting in how different people, or groups of people, are accommodated or not, either belong or do not, are included or not. The introduction of the disabled *flâneur,* presents one who is both in and out of a society, a stranger within, the 'Other' who already exists before inclusion, and whose very presence both confirms and challenges existing contexts. Campbell then discusses how social inclusion can be paradoxical, both accommodating and excluding. Social inclusion can also be about boundary maintenance and boundary challenge. Finally, with the contradictions of social inclusion, she advocates that "further research and theoretical work is required on the beneficiaries of inclusion – those (en)abled people who experience, albeit unacknowledged indebted guilt at being assumptively included." Campbell's paper therefore challenges all of us about how the insiders and outsiders of a social inclusion agenda are determined; and more critically, the legitimacy of such a determination.

Thanks and Welcome

Creating this journal would not have been possible without the support of a range of significant contributions. These have included the strategic and financial support of Griffith University, through the Vice Chancellor / President; and also the Pro Vice Chancellor of Griffith Health and the Griffith Institute of Health and Medical Research. We are thankful, as well to the staff of the School of Human Services and Social Work at Griffith University for creating the vision of this journal.

        To the support staff who have assisted in processing and designing the development of the journal, we appreciate your assistance in facilitating the vision. To our local, national and international colleagues who have accepted our invitation to be members of the Editorial Advisory Board and to the peer reviewers of the submitted manuscripts, we are grateful. Members of the Editorial Team, namely myself, Dr Fiona Kumari Campbell, Associate Professor Donna McAuliffe, Ms Cathy Roberts and Ms Valerie Schefe, have met regularly to oversee the establishment of the journal and we are thankful for their contributions of time, knowledge and effort, and we are particularly grateful for the constructive contribution of Dr Fiona Kumari Campbell. The production of the journal would not have materialised in such a timely manner without Valerie Schefe, as Assistant Editor.

        To all of the contributors of this first issue, we extend our congratulations. It is not easy to write papers for a first issue of a new journal, while the journal itself is also being created.

        We also thank those within the Griffith community who have generously shared their knowledge, and others who have supported us virtually and practically via the journal's Facebook page.

        To our readers, again, welcome to this first issue of the *Journal of Social Inclusion*. We hope that you will continue to support the journal to be released biannually in April and October. Also, perhaps you will share with us in engaging with the topic of *Social Inclusion* by submitting papers, being prepared to review papers and letting us know of significant events. We believe that the inception of this journal is timely and will make a significant scholarly contribution. We welcome your feedback.

Associate Professor Jayne Clapton
Head of School, Human Services and Social Work

On behalf of the Editorial Team

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[1] As outlined on the Australian Government Social Inclusion website (http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/SIAgenda/Priorities/Pages/default.aspx, accessed April 2010)
[2] As outlined on the Australian Government Social Inclusion website (http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/SIAgenda/Priorities/Pages/default.aspx, accessed April 2010)
[3] Clapton, J. 2009. *A transformatory ethic of inclusion: Rupturing concepts of disability and inclusion*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.