

# CHANGE FEST 2018

The national celebration of  
place-based social change

# STATEMENT

## First Nations People

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, who participated in ChangeFest 2018 at the Logan Entertainment Centre during 19–22 November 2018, call for ChangeFest 2018 participants to support the recognition of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the First Peoples and recognise their land, sea and water rights in the Australian Constitution; and
- The contents of the May 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart, plus endorsing the requirement that its contents will be enacted in all relevant statutes in Local, State, Territory and Federal jurisdictions.

As part of this call, ChangeFest 2018 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People reminded participants it is Non-Negotiable that any national movement designed to create a more equitable and inclusive Australia must act consistently with the national Indigenous consensus position advanced in the Uluru Statement from the Heart to ultimately:

- Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are empowered and enabled to be at the forefront of all system change design and delivery;
- Result in Aboriginal-led and Torres Strait Islander-led local control of services and programs;
- Support and strengthen the treaty process in States and Territories.

ChangeFest 2018 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People reminded participants it is an ongoing universal obligation of Conference attendees to empower, support and enable ongoing First Nations-led consensus building of these statements.

## ChangeFest 2018 Participants

ChangeFest 2018 participants believe and acknowledge that any movement of change must recognise First Nations People and the statement above, to create a better future for Australians through a process of community co-creation of development, implementation and evaluation.

## Vision

Our vision is a future for Australia where communities thrive and where all children have a safe home, are healthy, are educated and have a strong sense of identity and belonging.

We are creating a movement of people that come together to promote a better future for all Australians by focussing on community and children as the focal point for empowerment, change and development. Despite Australia's global

economic success story, there are still too many communities where families feel excluded, and community members feel isolated and disempowered – daily we face entrenched and complex adversity as a result of historic, institutionalised injustice and inequality. This has significant societal and financial implications for all Australians and, without change, will prevent us from reaching our full potential.

Across Australia, many communities have long-term community-led initiatives to generate greater social and emotional health and well-being, cultural connections, and life opportunities for children and adults alike. Communities know from local and international experience that customised/place-based, community-led and integrated efforts that focus on the early years of life get results. The evidence base for what can deliver real lasting change in our communities is being co-created by content and context experts from all cultural backgrounds with the direct involvement of First Nations Peoples.

Now is the time for government, philanthropy, business and the community sector to further prioritise community-level action in addition to related national, population-level child development and community-building policies. As a country we are already making significant investments and there are many outstanding examples of innovation and progress. But many systems today do not support local people and their communities to make this change. We need to transform these systems. There is not enough focus on prevention and early support, we need more integrated approaches to funding, services and infrastructure, more tailoring to local diverse contexts, as well as more long-term investment in building community capacity to take greater responsibility for their own futures.

This is a smart investment. A focus on experiences during the early years (i.e., antenatal to 5 years old) provides a strong foundation for success in life. US studies show that every dollar invested on early childhood generates a return of \$7 over time.<sup>1</sup> Investing in our communities to support future generations is good for our society and our economy. The opportunity is huge. We estimate this approach could unlock significant financial resources by 2050 to be reinvested to achieve even better health, education and employment outcomes.

We need to reimagine the journey of our children and their diverse communities and this will require disruption of what currently is. Each year, there are 65,000 developmentally vulnerable children counting on us to create a better future. The choice is ours but not ours alone – beneficiaries must be part of the co-design process.

<sup>1</sup>Garcia, Heckman, Leaf, Prados, 'The Life-cycle benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program, 2016.

ChangeFest 2018 participants support a movement to advance communities that are tackling adversity and inequality:

- By giving children the best start in life
- Through evidence-based efforts that are integrated and tailored to local needs
- With the people in the community leading and driving the change
- Working together with government, philanthropists, non-governmental organisations, scientific research, and business

## Principles

In order to make this happen, self-defined communities, government, philanthropists, the not-for-profit sector and business need to agree to own and act according to the following core principles:

- **Shifting the balance of power and responsibility to communities.** Encourage, empower and support communities to lead, make decisions, and own both the outcomes sought, and the solutions – we know what solutions will work. This shift will improve accountability and help address the institutional and social inequality underpinning many community challenges.
- **Shared goals and solutions are tailored to local needs.** Investments have greater impact when we are aligned to the needs and goals of each unique place and when the community, government, philanthropy and other partners work collectively to achieve common outcomes.
- **Improved whole-of-life outcomes through strong foundations in the early years of life.** Focus on a child's wellbeing, knowing that investment in education, prevention and early support with the family and community around that child, will improve social and economic outcomes for individuals, families, communities, and country.
- **Change the system. The rules, processes, incentives and behaviours to deliver the impact Australians want where we live; including removing barriers and integrating silos of governance, funding and effort to deliver resources to communities more efficiently and effectively.**

In addition, ChangeFest 2018 participants believe our success will be underpinned by a long-term commitment to work together, learning and improving through iteration and informed by evidence, evaluation and data.

- **Begin now, with a long-term commitment to change.** Build necessary foundations now while acknowledging that entrenched and complex social issues cannot be solved overnight but need consistent, 10+ year commitments and resourcing to deliver positive change.
- **Collaborate and hold each other accountable.** Resource and organise for collaboration and accountability. Design and deliver more effective solutions through partnering, supported by coordinating organisations (e.g., 'backbones').
- **Iterate, evaluate and learn.** Support innovation and implementation of what works by encouraging testing, sharing innovations and learnings, and measuring impact as well as capability development.
- **Enable with data, community voice and evidence.** Better target effort as a result of increased data sharing, establishing means to listen to and act on community voice – including the narratives and stories that reflect the community experience, and use of evidence and scientific research.

## Call to action

ChangeFest 2018 participants call on political leaders, community organisations, philanthropists, businesses, and others to make a long-term, transparent investment in Australia by empowering communities to provide a better future for their children.

### 1. Invest in community leaders and action

- Support community leaders to organise and ensure accountable governance to make decisions and guide investment
- Build priority capabilities and capacity (e.g., data analysis, evaluation, community mobilisation, service design and commissioning, etc.) through specialist organisations (or 'intermediaries' who might take many forms)
- Resource the coordination and collaboration with local, state and national teams and share learnings (e.g., through 'backbones').

### 2. Change the system at all levels of government

- Establish a taskforce to design and implement change across all levels of government (including the negotiation of independent long-term structures across Commonwealth, State, Local and key non-government stakeholders)
- Within two years, progress institutional changes across all levels of government to ensure this platform is scalable and becomes a norm
- Tackle systemic barriers identified by community-led action (i.e., structures including culturally proficient governance and decision-making, pooled or integrated funding and participatory budgeting, and data sharing) to change the structural inequalities and make the system accountable to and deliver resourcing to communities
- Ensure all levels of government have the skills and authority to work in this new community-led way (e.g., through a government capability building program to change the culture and capabilities).

### 3. Create accountability and support across all stakeholders

- Work across all levels of government to support the effectiveness of community governance, provide authority to access and shape resourcing and ensure accountability of funding providers to communities and vice versa (e.g., community access to a combined team of relevant State regional directors and Commonwealth representatives)
- Establish senior bipartisan political leadership and accountability for change at the community and system level (e.g., lead State and Commonwealth minister)
- Invest in data, planning and evaluation capability and infrastructure that is community-focused (e.g., data labs and information platforms).

### 4. Establish an independent evidence program to inform the way ahead

- Resource independent evidence and evaluation partner(s) to look across the system and approach (e.g., research institutes)
- Capture and share evidence of innovation and learning across all actors and communities including through a process of co-measurement/co-creation and direct involvement of First Nations Peoples.

### 5. Reward community-led, early years efforts

- Invest \$2M per community<sup>2</sup> per year over 10+ years to enable this approach
- Start now by providing backing for 20 communities that are already changing (agreed by communities, Commonwealth, relevant States/Territories, and key philanthropists)
- Develop an evidence-informed plan to scale this approach to at a minimum 100 communities representing the diversity across the country over the coming decade.

<sup>2</sup>A 'backbone' team is an organisation/function dedicated to coordinating the various dimensions and collaborators involved in the initiative and supporting activities of community actors; may not be appropriate for all communities. <sup>3</sup>\$2.0M is an average; the right investment will be relative to size and maturity of each community.

More than 500 delegates signed up to the ChangeFest statement in November 2018. We are proud to be one of the organisations in active support of the statement.