
'What Change Can We Bring About With No Money?'

South Tuggeranong Child Aware Local Initiative Progress Report,

November 2015

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank members of the South Tuggeranong Child Aware Local Initiative Steering Group for their contributions to this report and Eileen O'Brien for her work in conducting the interviews.

Report produced by Kate Butler
© Families Australia, November 2015

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Child Aware Local Initiative (CALI) aims to build capacity in communities to undertake prevention and early intervention activities which contribute to keeping children safe and well. It is a priority under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 and the Second Action Plan 2012-2015.

The central principles underpinning CALI are:

- protecting children is everyone's business
- children have a right to be safe, valued and care for
- the best way to protect children is to prevent abuse and neglect from happening in the first place
- children and families should have a 'voice' in decisions affecting their lives
- governments, communities, organisations and individuals can work together to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families
- children are usually best supported within their families
- a 'one size fits all' approach does not work across Australia's diverse communities
- local solutions are required for local problems
- culturally diverse groups need culturally sensitive responses.

At a national level, Families Australia and the Australian Centre for Child Protection have responsibility for driving CALI in seven communities. These local initiatives were supported to develop and implement sustainable local plans of action by bringing together existing resources and networks within communities.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report documents the progress and key learnings from the South Tuggeranong CALI in the ACT. It is not intended to be an evaluation of the initiative, rather the focus of the report is to highlight the achievements of this local initiative from the perspectives of core members (n=10) of the South Tuggeranong CALI steering group. These views have been supplemented with background documents and recorded notes of planning meetings to provide an overview of the initiative. Interviews were conducted in March 2015 and again during August and September 2015.

OVERVIEW OF THE SOUTH TUGGERANONG CALI STRUCTURE

The nominated lead organisation of South Tuggeranong CALI is the YWCA of Canberra. This agency provides services and support to children, young people and their families across the ACT but particularly in the Tuggeranong region where the YWCA has developed an integrated service delivery model at the Lanyon Youth and Community Centre. The range of services provided includes the following:

- Child, Youth and Family Gateway which is a component of the ACT Government Human Services Gateway and provides a single access point to services for children, young people and their families.
- Tuggeranong Network Coordination – the Tuggeranong Region Network Coordinator maps and coordinates services for children, young people and their families in Tuggeranong. The Network Coordinator works with both universal and targeted services including schools and

supports the development of collaborative work between services to address service gaps and improve access for community members.

- Youth Engagement.
- Housing and homelessness services.
- Therapeutic services for children and young people aged 8-15 years.
- Community development at Lanyon and surrounding area.

The key functions of the lead agency were to provide leadership and coordination to support CALI. The coordination component was undertaken by the Tuggeranong Region Network Coordinator.

In forming the CALI steering group, members of the Tuggeranong Collaborative Rubric Governance Group were initially invited to participate. This group had originally been established to enhance service collaboration in the Tuggeranong region. However, a few stakeholders observed that it lacked real purpose and authority, and was struggling to create a shared vision, set goals and develop a plan to guide the development of partnerships between local agencies and services. It was felt that CALI, as a national initiative, provided the catalyst for stakeholders to become actively interested in working together to improve service delivery for vulnerable children and families living in the region.

I think that when the CALI project came along it gave us much more of a purpose. Steering group member

As the work of South Tuggeranong progressed, additional agencies were invited to participate. A total of 19 government and non-government agencies (see appendix 1) attended South Tuggeranong CALI steering group meetings during November 2014 and July 2015.

SOUTH TUGGERANONG COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

South Tuggeranong was chosen as the location for the ACT CALI due to pockets of relative disadvantage on a number of indicators, particularly those relating to young children. The suburbs included in South Tuggeranong are: Banks, Bonython, Calwell, Chisholm, Conder, Gordon, Isabella Plains, Richardson and Theodore.

The population of these suburbs represents 12.5% of the ACT population (357,200 people) or 44,500 people (ABS Census 2011). Of these suburbs, Gordon has the highest population with 7,767 people compared to Richardson which has the lowest number with 3,134 residents.

	Residents	Proportion of South Tuggeranong	Proportion of ACT
Banks	5,060	11.4%	1.4%
Bonython	3,837	8.6%	1.1%
Calwell	5,834	13.1%	1.6%
Chisholm	5,237	11.8%	1.5%
Conder	5,314	11.9%	1.5%
Gordon	7,767	17.4%	2.2%
Isabella Plains	4,315	9.7%	1.2%
Richardson	3,134	7.0%	0.9%
Theodore	4,021	9.0%	1.1%
Total	44,519	100.0%	12.5%
ACT population	357,218		

Compared with other ACT regions, Tuggeranong has the second highest number of children and young people aged 0 - 24 years with 31,268 residents in this age group¹. The region also has the largest number of 10 - 14 year olds (5,916) and 15 - 19 year olds (6,934).

All suburbs in South Tuggeranong had a higher proportion of one parent families with two dependent children (25%) compared to the ACT average of 23%. The highest was for Conder at 32%. Most suburbs, with the exception of Calwell and Conder, had a higher proportion of one parent families with three or more dependent children than the ACT average of 8.9%. The highest was Richardson at 14% followed by Isabella Plains, Theodore and Chisholm at 12%.

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Individuals (SEIFI) is a multi-dimensional measure of relative socio-economic disadvantage. It has been designed to measure an individual's relative access to material and social resources based on personal attributes such as income, educational background, or housing status. Recent analysis² of ACT SEIFI data reveals a much higher level of relative disadvantage in the ACT than has previously been reported using SEIFA data. SEIFA captures the extent of socio-economic disadvantage at an area level which distorts the diverse nature of some ACT suburbs where the most and least advantaged individuals live side by side.

SEIFI data is only available for one South Tuggeranong suburb, Isabella Plains. This suburb has 4,315 residents. Of these residents, there are 1030 people who fall into the most socio-economically

¹ ABS, (2012). *Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia*. Cat. no. 3235.0.

² ACT Government, (2012). *Detecting Disadvantage in the ACT*.

disadvantaged quintile and second most socio-economically disadvantaged quintile of all Australians aged 15-64 years.

YOUNG CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

The importance of early life for children's later health and development has become increasingly clear. Data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) highlights how children are developing in different communities across the country as they enter school. Five domains of early childhood development which lay the foundations for adult health, education and social outcomes are measured. These domains are: physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; and communication skills and general knowledge.

The AEDC results for the Tuggeranong region reveal growing inequalities affecting children living in several suburbs in this region. These inequalities are likely to track forward into adulthood in the absence of effective policies and practice likely to have the greatest impact.

Across the Tuggeranong region in 2012, there was a greater proportion of young children (24.6%) who were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains in comparison to the ACT (22%) and Australia (22%)³. In the same year, Tuggeranong was the ACT region with the highest proportion of developmental vulnerability in three of the five domains (social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills).

The AEDC data reveals there has been a slight increase in the proportion of children in Tuggeranong who are developmentally vulnerable between 2009 and 2012:

- 2 % more children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains in 2012;
- 1% more children developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains in 2012.

Developmental vulnerability varies considerably across Tuggeranong suburbs including those in the south of the region.

- In 2012, the South Tuggeranong suburbs with the highest percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains were Theodore (41.3%), Gordon (36.7%), Chisholm (26.7%) and Conder (25.4%).
- The South Tuggeranong suburbs with the highest percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains were Theodore (25.3%), Gordon (15.7%), Conder (13.0%), Calwell (12.0%) and Chisholm (12.0%).
- The highest percentages of developmental vulnerability were evident in the following South Tuggeranong suburbs on the five AEDC domains:
 - Physical health and wellbeing - Theodore (17.3%), Gordon (12.8%), Chisholm (12%);
 - Social competence - Theodore (26.7%), Gordon (22%), Calwell (12%);
 - Emotional maturity - Theodore (17.3%), Gordon (11.9%), Calwell (11.8%);
 - Language and cognitive skills - Theodore (12%), Chisholm (8%), Conder (7.2%);
 - Communication skills and general knowledge - Theodore (20%), Conder (13%), Chisholm (10.7%), Gordon (10.1%).

³ Australian Early Development Census. (2014). Commonwealth of Australia. At <http://www.aedc.gov.au/data>.

PLANNING PROCESS

The South Tuggeranong CALI steering group developed an action plan that included a range of early intervention strategies for vulnerable families. The overarching aim of the action plan is:

to develop strategies designed to support vulnerable and socially isolated children and their families to form stronger connections to school, and to provide parents with better access to the services and supports that they may need to better support their children's development, education and wellbeing.

Several planning sessions were conducted, facilitated by an external consultant, which provided stakeholders with an opportunity to clearly define the purpose of South Tuggeranong CALI and set out some tangible, practical intentions that could be achieved within available existing resources. This initiative did not receive any external funding other than a small amount to cover costs associated with documenting joint inter-agency activities and catering for steering group meetings.

A defining characteristic of South Tuggeranong CALI was the promotion of a shared response to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Joint planning of service delivery prompted the identification of gaps and inconsistencies in service provision. The region has some services to support vulnerable children, young people and their families provided by the YWCA, Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre, community services and services provided by schools. However, there was general agreement amongst steering group members that these services are spread relatively thinly and need to be more coordinated. There are very few services actually located in Tuggeranong and which have been designed to meet the needs of the local community.

A summary of the major issues facing the community as identified by the steering group is given below.

- Children are entering pre-school with little or no skills in literacy and numeracy. Their home environment does not provide a basic grounding in literacy and numeracy.
- Those children who are most at-risk are not accessing pre-school.
- Pre-school enrolment process is inaccessible to many vulnerable families.
- Many parents live in social isolation with few or no social support networks.
- Mechanisms are not in place to connect isolated families with schools and promote positive relationships between parents and schools which impacts on educational outcomes for children.
- Insufficient support services for children, young people and families, particularly mental health services for children and young people, youth homelessness service, drug and alcohol services for young people, and support services for 8 to 15 year olds. The large ACT-wide services do not have a real presence in Tuggeranong and local services are overstretched.
- Some children struggle to successfully transition from primary to high school. Transitioning from high school to college is also

The CALI action plan is service coordination at its best. There is real problem solving, information sharing and collaboration. Steering group member

problematic for some young people resulting in them not completing Year 11.

The focus of planning discussions was on identifying what is *currently working well* in supporting families and children and exploring what resources could be shared to enhance current approaches and diminish service deficits. Some of this work had begun prior to the formation of the CALI steering group through service co-location, partnership agreements and MOU's but there was consensus that greater coordination and collaboration is needed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the community.

A series of long-term and medium-term outcomes were agreed on and relate to two domains: children and young people's education, and families connections to schools and support services.

Long-term early development and education outcomes

- Kindergarten children have improved outcomes in the AEDC
- Young people successfully complete high school education
- Young people transition to further education and training

Medium-term early development and education outcomes

- Families have access to playgroups
- Children under 4 years have routine health and development checks and receive appropriate follow-up treatment
- Children aged 4 years are enrolled and attend pre-school education
- Children make a successful transition to high school

Long-term family outcomes

- Families are connected to their community
- Children and young people feel safe at home

Medium-term family outcomes

- Families access the services they need
- Families are assisted to support their children's education
- Families are connected to schools.

Details of the range of collaborative strategies to achieve these outcomes can be found in the South Tuggeranong CALI Action Plan (see appendix 2). Several working groups were established to implement these strategies.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION ON CALI ACTION PLAN

A community consultation survey, based on the West Belconnen Human Services Blueprint consultation tool, was distributed by the Tuggeranong Network Coordinator, staff at Lanyon Youth and Community Centre, and several members of the CALI steering group. The Tuggeranong Network Coordinator interviewed people at Tuggeranong Hyperdome, Lanyon shopping centre and Erindale library. The survey was also available in an online format. A total of 45 responses have so far been elicited; the community consultation is viewed as an on-going process.

Better mental health services and access to safe places for young people who are out of home. Community member

Preliminary analysis indicates that the major community concerns include the following issues:

- more cohesive and reliable public transport is needed
- neglect of children
- people not feeling safe
- a lack of community activities
- inadequate services and facilities for families, young people and older people.

Family oriented services and facilities so our next generation can grow up in a safe environment with the support for parents and carers so the best outcomes can be achieved. Community member

As the community consultation data is incomplete, it has not been utilised to inform the steering group's priorities or in the design of new initiatives. Several core members of the steering group observed that due to the composition of the steering group, there was adequate knowledge around the table about the community's needs and strengths. However, a few core members noted that there was a need to capture the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the community rather than relying on "assumptions about the needs" and that this should have been done at the outset of the initiative. It was also felt that parents/carers, children and young people as well as local businesses should have more of a voice and opportunities to contribute to CALI. In that these groups of stakeholders could have an active part in the solution-finding process from co-defining the problems through to implementing the solutions.

It was suggested that ideally a more comprehensive needs assessment should have been conducted. However, funding to do this was unavailable and individual members of the steering group did not have the time or capacity to do this type of work.

"Community consultation takes time, it takes money. It's a research project really. Steering group member

ACHIEVEMENTS

In the short time that South Tuggeranong CALI has been operating, core steering group members identified several achievements and changes that have occurred as a result of the efforts by people involved in this initiative. These achievements were defined in terms of: information sharing; establishing linkages between schools, the Department Education and Training's Student Engagement Team and community organisations; creating pathways for vulnerable families to access support services; sharing resources and establishing partnerships between agencies. Working with other organisations was viewed as particularly useful in broadening individual agencies' reach in the community.

CALI really helped us reach the very vulnerable people in the community, those not previously accessing services. Steering group member

Steering group members highlighted the following achievements:

- An enhanced appreciation by steering group members of the key social issues affecting vulnerable children, young people and parents/carers.
- A better understanding of each others' work and roles across sectors.
- Stronger working relationships between individual members of the CALI steering group and an increased understanding of how agencies can work together effectively.
- Promotion of the Child, Youth and Family Services Gateway.
- A 'meet and greet' morning for primary and high school principals, Indigenous Education Officers and community organisations. As a result, schools are now more informed about the range of community services that are available in South Tuggeranong, individual professional connections have been made, some students were linked to the Smith Family support services, and connections were made with the Child, Youth and Family Services Gateway.
- The YWCA's Youth Engagement Team now provides outreach support to Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre.
- The Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre has started to run 2 parenting programs in schools: Cool Little Kids, a program for parents of children under 8 years with anxiety and Circle of Security, an early intervention program to enhance attachment between parents and children.
- Funding has been secured for a leadership program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls which will focus on issues relating to transitioning to high school.

When there are better connected schools and community support agencies, families always benefit. Steering group member

Achieving real outcomes from the networking. It wasn't just networking for networking's sake. Steering Group member

Additional examples of collaborative activities that occurred during the life of South Tuggeranong CALI are detailed below.

1. Early Links to Learning Project

A supported playgroup that is designed to:

- assist parents in developing their young children's oral language skills;

- connect isolated families to schools and facilitate positive relationships between parents and school staff.

It is a partnership between YWCA and 3 primary schools.

Rationale for the project: in South Tuggeranong there are concerns about children starting school without the oral language skills that support their development of reading abilities and therefore academic success at school. The link between early oral language and literacy development, including listening, speaking, reading and writing, is well established⁴. Low literacy skills are associated with poorer outcomes in school achievement, levels of self esteem, physical and mental health, housing, employment, community participation and criminal activity.

Who is the project for? Parents and their children aged 2 - 4 years.

How it works: three primary schools - Charles Condor, Gordon and Bonython, used gentle methods to recruit parents with young children to reduce potential embarrassment or feelings of shame that parents might experience in being invited to participate in this type of initiative. A total of 15 parents and their children took part in the play group.

Teachers, with specialist language/literacy skills, from partner schools visited the supported playgroup and engaged parents and children in activities that specifically help them to explore language and develop children's oral language skills. The importance of investing time is viewed as an essential component of developing relationships with parents. Establishing a good rapport with parents enables participating teachers to act as a familiar conduit to schools.

Sharing resources: the YWCA, under their community development stream, were able to purchase appropriate early years learning materials and provided the venue for the supported playgroup at Lanyon Youth & Community Centre. The 3 primary schools shared their teaching staff to provide input at the playgroup and used their resources to recruit parents.

Evaluation: the original intention was to develop the project as a pilot and evaluate implementation processes and the changes experienced by children and parents with a view to making any necessary modifications and scaling up the initiative at new sites in the region. To date, in the current tight fiscal environment, partner agencies have been unable to source funding for an external evaluation.

2. Pre-school enrolment and attendance

Some vulnerable families miss out on enrolling their children into local pre-schools. The prime difficulties frequently encountered relate to a complicated on-line enrolment process that is only open for a 4 week period and not enrolling early enough to secure a place. The option of sending their children to pre-schools outside their immediate area of residence is not feasible due to transport issues. Some families also need support to ensure their children regularly attend pre-school.

⁴ Kirkland, L.D. & Patterson, J. (2005). Developing Oral Language in Primary Classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32:6, 391-395.

A working group was set up to develop a communication strategy to promote early enrolment. The intention was encourage a range of agencies and services to distribute information about enrolment processes, and where appropriate, include a question about pre-school enrolment as part of their assessment process.

Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre, the Smith Family and PCYC now promote pre-school enrolment to the families that they work with and provide information to families about how and when to enrol. The Education & Training Department's Student Engagement Team have simplified the pre-school enrolment fact sheet which is with the relevant Minister for approval. There are also plans for this department to implement a regular community information campaign for pre-school enrolment.

3. Co-location of services

Prior to South Tuggeranong CALI, the Smith Family had developed some expertise in co-locating their service at Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre. Building on this successful approach and as part of the continuing development of a service hub at Lanyon Youth & Community Centre, the Smith Family co-located a worker at the centre to assist families so they are in a stronger position to support their children's education. During this period, the worker set up a Let's Read literacy program (for children aged 0 - 5 years) through the Gugan Gulwan Young Mum's group. The worker also provided training on the Let's Read program for staff from YWCA and Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre.

Co-location of the Smith Family worker also occurred at Theodore primary school which has resulted in 20 families accessing the Smith Family Learning for Life program and linking some of these families to other programs at Tuggeranong Child Family Centre (e.g. parenting programs). This approach to delivering the Learning for Life program is now embedded in the work of all ACT Smith Family workers who deliver this program; to date 6 schools across the ACT have a co-located worker as do Gungahlin and Belconnen Child and Family Centres.

CALI's given us the push that we needed and we've done it successfully. It's proven that it can be done. Now we're doing the same process across the ACT.
Steering group member

In being co-located with other agencies, the worker was able to break down barriers and be more accessible to families. It provided opportunities to develop good working relationships and a sound understanding of the roles and work of other agencies. Two parents' stories⁵ are given below to highlight the benefits of this approach.

⁵ Names has been changed to protect identities

Isabel's story

Isabel has three children and was referred to the Smith Family's Learning for Life program by a local primary school. Isabel is unable to work due to chronic health problems. Her partner is also unemployed. The family needed some extra support to enhance the children's academic success at school.

Being co-located at the primary school and regularly involved in the school's breakfast club resulted in Isabel frequently dropping in to see the Learning for Life program coordinator to talk about her daughters, one of whom has been diagnosed with ADHD. Isabel is strongly focussed on her children getting an education and accesses every available opportunity to achieve this. Through the Learning for Life program she has been able to obtain book packs for her children, cover the cost of school uniforms and ensure her daughters have their lunches at school.

Co-location at the school means that she can have weekly chats about her children's progress at school. She also got to know about the Smith Family's student2student program which two of her daughters are now enrolled in.

The program coordinator hopes to turn the school's Breakfast Club into a Learning Club where children will have access to tutors and participate in activities that improve their academic and social skills.

Ruth's story

Ruth and her two school aged children have been involved in the Smith Family's Learning for Life program for several years. This program provides emotional, practical and financial support to help disadvantaged children and young people with their education.

The Learning for Life program coordinator, through being co-located at the local child and family centre, was able to provide solid, regular support through several difficult periods for the family. Ruth attends a playgroup with her younger children at the child and family centre which enabled the program coordinator to spend some time with her every week and provide support. This arrangement has been the linchpin to being able to provide effective support at times of crisis.

Ruth's eldest daughter was badly bullied at school to the point where she felt unable to continue attending school. Ruth asked the program coordinator to help her find a new school. Successful advocacy work by the program coordinator resulted in Ruth's two school aged daughters changing schools which increased the eldest daughter's school attendance rate.

The family were living in a house requiring substantial repairs and were moved by the housing department to temporary accommodation in a motel room for several weeks. The motel was a 30 minutes drive away from the daughters' school. Prohibitive petrol costs threatened regular school attendance by the daughters. This was averted by the program coordinator arranging community transport so the girls could get to school.

For this family, financial assistance has helped remove some of the barriers they faced with the children's full participation in education. The Learning for Life program has been able to provide financial support to cover some educational costs such as school uniforms. Swimming lessons and other fun activities have also been financed through the program.

Ruth's two older daughters have also participated in the Smith Family's Student2Student program that matches students who need to improve their reading with peer buddies who help and encourage them with their reading.

More recently, the family are dealing with the trauma relating to the sexual abuse of one of Ruth's daughters. One immediate consequence is that she has disengaged from school. The program coordinator continues to provide emotional and practical support with the aim of keeping her in school.

The program coordinator has been able to foster a respectful and supportive relationship with Ruth and her daughters, and connect the family to vital service supports. She supported Ruth in her parental role as well as being mindful of the needs of her daughters. Throughout this time, Ruth's strong belief in the importance of her children receiving an education that they deserve and need was the motivator for persistence and change.

The educational and social outcomes generated for the children of these families include:

- enabling the children to obtain necessary educational resources such as books, school uniforms as well as school lunches so they can participate in school;
- keeping the children engaged in school;
- improving their reading skills;
- providing enrichment opportunities that enable children to pursue their interests and feel that they belong and 'fit in' with their peers.

RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENTS

South Tuggeranong CALI received an ACT Children's Week Award in 2015 for its focus on early intervention and connecting children and their families to community services with the overall aim of keeping children safe and well. In addition, a few steering group members commented that South Tuggeranong CALI itself was seen as producing significant results by external stakeholders including those involved in inter-agency initiatives linked to the Human Services Blueprint and Child, Youth and Family Services program.

ENABLERS AND CHALLENGES

ENABLING FACTORS

Overall, core steering group members described the way they worked together positively in terms of building relationships, cooperation and resource sharing. They identified several factors that contributed to the achievements of the initiative. These are summarised below.

- The leadership and drive towards more integrated service delivery by the lead agency's senior staff representative.
- The capacity and hard work of the Tuggeranong Network Coordinator.
- Existing partnerships between the Lanyon Youth and Community Centre, YWCA and schools in the region, plus emerging relationships between other agencies, for example, the Smith Family and Gugan Gulwan.
- Current knowledge, collected by the Tuggeranong Collaborative Rubric Governance Group, about the level of collaboration among service providers in the Tuggeranong region.
- A comprehensive understanding of the issues and challenges facing people living in South Tuggeranong by members of the steering group
- The commitment by core steering group members to work together with a common purpose as well as an abundance of "goodwill" to work for change.
- The action planning processes that kept vulnerable children at the centre of generating solutions. The involvement of schools and community organisations engendered meaningful discussions about underlying problems and how these could be addressed.
- Using an external facilitator for the planning meetings and development of the action plan enabled full participation by steering group members, particularly younger professionals. This was seen as an important step for building linkages between agencies.
- Funding from the national CALI organisers to document progress and cover the catering costs for steering group meetings. As well as support from Families Australia, one of the national lead agencies of the initiative.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING CALI?

Floating steering group membership

Core steering group members identified the rate of changing steering committee membership over the life of the initiative as a limiting factor in progressing strategies in the CALI action plan. Several key members left due to new employment opportunities and were not replaced by the agencies that they represented. Coupled with this was the irregular attendance at meetings by key stakeholders such as Australian Federal Police and Centrelink.

It was also recognised that a few people worked on rosters or on a part-time basis which prevented them from attending on a regular basis and that overall, members had competing work priorities that limited the amount of time they could give to implementing CALI strategies. The fluidity in membership was acknowledged as a significant contributing factor to losing momentum and not getting traction on the implementation of several strategies in the action plan. A few steering group members also suggested that a related factor was the size of the steering group, in that it was too large and unwieldy for it to operate effectively.

Strong leadership

A lack of strong leadership and management commonly results in poor, ongoing implementation of inter-agency initiatives. Several steering group members suggested that the loss of leadership midway through the initiative, and no replacement by the lead agency, had a negative impact on the group's capacity to continue functioning effectively. It was noted that since the loss of leadership there had only been one steering group meeting and no follow-up since this. It was thought that this could potentially have a negative impact on the linkages developed between agencies in that the steering group was "very valuable for keeping those connections going".

Leadership is so important. Leaders set the vision in everyone's mind. Leadership carries the vision. Steering group member

A few steering committee members also observed that the authorising environment necessary for collaboration in a service network context is often interpreted as senior executives of agencies "giving permission" for staff to be involved. To help reduce the problematic effects of 'staff churn', collaborative efforts such as the South Tuggeranong CALI require the leadership of agencies to place more emphasis on legitimising their managers and workers' involvement throughout their organisational policies and processes.

Funding

South Tuggeranong CALI was able to introduce several significant changes relating to a stronger focus on early childhood services for vulnerable families, inter-agency sharing of resources and co-location of services with no additional funding. However, most of the steering group members interviewed indicated that the absence of any specific funding for CALI has had some adverse consequences. A sole reliance on the goodwill of agencies, particularly in the context of high staff churn, means that when significant stakeholders move onto other employment opportunities, that good will is weakened. There are no incentives for agencies to continue investing staff time and other agency resources into interagency work, particularly in the context of a short-term initiative.

Without any money, we did things better. Steering group member

In addition, the position of network coordinator for the Tuggeranong region covered a wide range of responsibilities. It was observed that this limited the amount of time this position could focus on coordinating the work of the CALI steering group and engaging GPs in developmental issues regarding young children. The general feeling amongst steering group members was that greater success could have been achieved with implementing the action plan if a position had been funded to facilitate and coordinate South Tuggeranong CALI. This would have allowed for a more comprehensive and complete community consultation to have been conducted and a greater emphasis on working towards outcomes relating to young people and their families.

Our task was 'what change can we bring about with no money?' We're again relying on goodwill from people... A non-funded project just cannot take precedence over all the other demands of everyone's jobs. This had a huge impact on what we were able to achieve. Steering group member

ACT government priorities

South Tuggeranong CALI was perceived by some steering group members as having a low priority for the ACT government, in particular the Community Services Directorate. It was observed that the ACT Government's Human Services Blueprint, Local Services Network in West Belconnen received far greater funding and other resources in spite of the two initiatives essentially doing similar work.

The issue of cross-government priorities was also raised in the context of the Community Services Directorate and the Department of Education and Training. In working towards a more integrated model of service delivery that identifies and attends to the needs of vulnerable children, young people and families, there needs to be more of an aligned interest between these two departments in establishing an authorising environment for collaborative initiatives between schools and community services. It was suggested that the Community Services Directorate could have been more proactive, especially in terms of improving communication between the two government agencies.

Lack of focus on young people

A few steering group members commented that there had been an inadequate response to implementing strategies concerning young people. This was seen as being due to not having the "right people at the table", that is high school principals. In addition, the point at which a working party started to meet to develop a plan to address issues facing young people attending school whose basic living needs are not being met, steering group meetings ceased. Resulting in work on youth issues not being progressed.

SUSTAINING THE MOMENTUM

With the loss of key steering group members including a senior staff member from the lead agency who left this organisation and the Tuggeranong Network Coordinator who has not been replaced, the future of South Tuggeranong CALI is under question. By the end of the 12 month period for this initiative, the lead agency had not indicated whether it would continue with its previous level of commitment to the initiative and the work of the steering group. In the meantime, the steering group has not convened any meetings for several months and progress on implementing CALI strategies has stalled.

For the way forward, it needs a lead agency that is prepared and is financially supported to drive CALI. Otherwise it will remain parked.
Steering group member

Core steering group members were asked to identify what is needed to sustain the momentum that has been achieved and for South Tuggeranong CALI to continue working for change. Although the majority of individuals stated they would like to continue working collaboratively, they commented that leadership and funding to resource a coordinator/facilitator were both critical for the initiative's future, and that without these, it would cease operating.

Steering group members suggested that decisions about which agency should take the lead role need to be made on the basis of its commitment to collaboration at a network level as well as its capacity to provide consistent, strong leadership and authority to drive change. It was also suggested that there needed to be firm commitment to CALI from the head of this agency's executive so that in the event of personnel changes, the lead agency responds in a timely way to ensure the continuing functioning of CALI. In addition, it was recommended there needed to be a stronger emphasis on involving senior management of all agencies involved in South Tuggeranong CALI so that staff are supported to implement strategies in the action plan.

No matter how much people like to think you can run these projects at a community level with existing resources, you actually can't. Steering group member

Several members of the steering committee observed that having an ongoing, central organiser for the group was critical for its functioning. It was suggested that this needs to be a funded position and the functions of this role could include facilitating the steering group, coordinating the implementation of the action plan and monitoring progress on the achievement of intended outcomes. The observation was made that if an initiative is not funded, it is not seen as a priority in terms of people's competing work demands. It was recognised that the previous lead agency is possibly not in a position to retain this coordinating role without dedicated funding for this work.

It is so underserved with so few community facilities compared to the need. The fact that West Belconnen was being funded to do essentially the same thing didn't help. The needs are no different in Tuggeranong. Why should we have to do it with no resources - again? Steering group member

One suggestion was that in the absence of available funding for a coordinating position, CALI could continue creating change in South Tuggeranong in the provision of services to vulnerable families with the "right leadership" and small grants of \$5000. As service providers are severely fiscally restrained, it was thought that small amounts of funding could enable a degree of change to occur provided it was given to an agency that understands the needs of the community, and has the commitment and capacity to deliver.

Other key opportunities for improvement identified by steering group members include reducing the size of the steering group to a more manageable size and prioritising strategies for action on an annual basis. In addition, it was mooted by a few steering group members that there may be an opportunity to re-brand South Tuggeranong CALI, either as a component of the Child, Youth and Family Services Program Network Coordination or the ACT government's Human Service Blueprint Local Area Network.

Appendix 1: Agencies participating in South Tuggeranong CALI

YWCA

The Smith Family

ACT Education and Training Department, Student Engagement Team

Tuggeranong Child & Family Centre

PCYC

Bonython Primary School

Calwell Primary School

Gugan Gulwan

Catholic Care

Relationships Australia

ACT Medicare Local

Anglicare

Domestic Violence Crisis Service

ACT Government Strengthening Families

Carers ACT

Barnardos

Centrelink

ACT Police, Crime Reduction Unit

Communities @ Work