



**Submit 25 July 2016**

*Transforming  
lives for stronger  
communities*

## **Introduction**

Family Life appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the complex challenge of reforming Human Services and the Productivity Commission inquiry.

Family Life is an independent, entrepreneurial community organisation, working with vulnerable families, children and young people. A medium size, agile organisation, we have a reputation for innovation and knowledge sharing, through our National and International connections.

An organisational theory of change embeds shared understanding of change efforts across the agency, provides direction for evaluation, outcome measurement and social impact analysis, and guides decision-making for optimal effectiveness, accountability and learning. Our strategic pillars for continuous improvement optimise innovation and entrepreneurship in our drive to achieve impact

### **Family Life's purpose is transforming lives for stronger communities.**

We believe sustainable solutions to personal and social problems are found in community, with the people who need to benefit from social change.

We also believe we find these solutions by creating an environment in which content and context experts can come together for ideas to emerge and thrive through action for social, cultural and personal change. Through content and context experts we connect the evidence to the grass roots knowledge to inform co-design and strategic planning and action.

To achieve this process for change, we build community & professional engagement, participation and collaboration for innovation, enterprise and impact for wellbeing.

This is the overall mindset which informs this submission to the Productivity Commission. We do not have the capacity to fully expand on our perspective and provide only summary points for consideration below. We would however, certainly welcome expanding further on our views in an appropriate forum or discussion.

#### **Sandringham**

197 Bluff Road Sandringham  
VIC Australia 3191  
T +61 3 8599 5433  
F +61 3 9598 8820

#### **Frankston**

Level 1, 146 Young Street  
Frankston VIC Australia 3199  
T +61 3 9784 0650  
F +61 3 9770 2906

#### **Cheltenham**

Level 2, 11 Chesterville Road  
Cheltenham VIC Australia 3192  
T +61 3 8599 5433  
F +61 3 9598 8820

[www.familylife.com.au](http://www.familylife.com.au)  
[info@familylife.com.au](mailto:info@familylife.com.au)

Family Life Limited  
ABN 37 712 782 209

## **Family Life comments on ways to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and improved outcomes through reform of human services**

1. A more effective human services sector overall requires changes to the government regulatory environment, funding and contracting processes to align with promoting sector performance, capacity and capability for improving outcomes.
2. Outcomes must be clearly articulated in meaningful terms of improvements and changes for the intended beneficiaries of public policy, whether these beneficiaries are individuals, a particular group of citizens, or communities and the broader society. We need to be clear about our goals, set outcome targets and measures for tracking our performance towards those outcomes.
3. Reform decisions require we improve our understanding of the actual costs of providing a quality service which is targeted to meeting the improvement outcomes for individuals and the community.
4. If our outcomes are targeted to solving society's biggest problems, like reducing homelessness, poverty and disadvantage, and increasing health and wellbeing, then the government enabling and regulatory environment needs to help build strong, effective organizations and not just contract for projects and services. Decision making about how to achieve efficiency, quality and effectiveness must focus on what it takes to achieve impact, rather than what it takes to fund a program.
5. Working to address society's biggest problems, and ensuring we do this with the best quality services we can for those who live with these problems, requires an interdisciplinary and intersector collaborative approach commensurate with the complexity of the problems being addressed. Collective Impact and Shared Value are emerging frameworks and approaches with a growing evidence base for delivering significant change and social and economic progress. Both are based on bringing government, community and business expertise into dynamic engagement for achieving impact. Examples of these approaches delivering results are available in Australia and internationally.
6. The public and private funds available may achieve a better return on investment, measured in terms of social and economic progress, when these funds are pooled and innovation for change is supported within a framework of bipartisan commitment to policy goals focussed on the long term benefits and impact: goals which are established outside of election cycles and enabled with funding contracts of appropriate length for delivering change and impact.
7. Two improved data sets are needed. Firstly accurate data about the real costs of delivering to an outcome – the capacity building, work force development, infrastructure supports. And secondly the real costs of measuring performance – costs allowing for innovation, process and outcomes evaluation, measurement and data collection and analysis.
8. We propose that government explore evidence and strategies which support investing in increased collaboration rather than competition as a procurement



approach. Family Life invites consideration of our current Collective Impact initiative with the Shire of Cardinia Together We Can for stopping and preventing family violence, as a promising practice example of grassroots collaboration informed by evidence, guided by process and outcomes evaluation, with pooled funding and support from government, philanthropy, community and business. Importantly, as the change process is targeted to local action and community ownership, Together We Can also demonstrates adaption of an international approach to Australian place and context. The contributed and pooled funding model provides the opportunity for government to step back from over managing a funding contract to allow creativity and innovation to emerge through the dynamic of people engagement, relationship and trust building.

Yours sincerely

Jo Cavanagh  
Chief Executive Officer  
Family Life