

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## What's in a Place?

**Associate Professor Michael Darcy and Dr Gabrielle Gwyther from Social Justice and Social Change (SJSC) are exploring strategies for addressing the social exclusion of poor and disadvantaged people through a collaboration with the Australian Government Centrelink Agency.**

"Experience and research by governments both here and overseas recognises that disadvantage is not simply a matter of money, and that other factors act as barriers to full participation in the benefits of Australian society" says Associate Professor Darcy. "These barriers include local conditions like the demise of local industries and job opportunities, lack of transport infrastructure, or difficulties accessing local support services. In an attempt to improve services and promote the social inclusion of its customers and other disadvantaged people around Australia, Centrelink has introduced an experimental initiative called the Place Based Services program. In this program, Centrelink staff work with local service providers and community members to develop strategies to tackle social disadvantage and make their local area more inclusive. The program is operating in seven localities across four states and the Northern Territory. Our research will explore how different Place-Based initiatives have responded to local conditions and the impact of innovations in service delivery on social inclusion outcomes for poor and disadvantaged people".

The UWS research team is working closely with both Place Based Services providers and clients to review local social inclusion initiatives using document analysis, and interviews and focus groups with providers, users and other stakeholders. Local initiatives will be compared to see what is common to all programs and what might be different or specific to the local area in which they operate. The program as a whole will be evaluated to assess the effectiveness of this



approach in contributing to social inclusion, and to explore possible roles for Centrelink in improving local service delivery.

The outcomes of this project will assist Centrelink to improve services to marginalised groups throughout Australia and contribute to possible policy changes aimed at decreasing social exclusion and social disadvantage.

**Project Title:** Evaluation of Centrelink's Place Based Services

**Funding has been set at:** \$136,400

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