

### Social Inclusion

#### Definition

A socially inclusive society is defined as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity (Cappo, 2002).

In a socially inclusive community, residents have opportunities to participate fully in the social, economic and cultural life of their community. Social inclusion policies facilitate access to employment, education, health, housing and democratic processes. These socially inclusive policies create health and wellbeing for individuals by creating a supportive community (Ferrie, 2008).

#### Overview

Communities that enable all citizens to play a full and useful role in the social, economic and cultural life of their community are likely to be healthier than those where people face insecurity, exclusion and deprivation

(World Health Organisation, 2003).

The Australian Government (2008) has developed a number of Social Inclusion Principles. Aspirational principles for social inclusion include:

- reducing disadvantage
- increasing social, civic and economic participation, and
- a greater voice combined with greater responsibility.



Public places can support social, economic and cultural inclusion, Bondi Junction NSW  
Source: Planning Institute of Australia



Public places which are welcoming for all members of the community, Cooma, NSW  
Source: SGS Economics and Planning

To achieve this aspiration, the Government has also developed principles to approach social inclusion including:

- building upon individual and community strengths
- using evidence to inform policy
- building partnerships with key stakeholders
- developing tailored services
- giving a high priority to early intervention and prevention, and
- planning for community sustainability.

These principles are also relevant to developing healthy spaces and places for new and existing communities, providing insights into the outcomes sought and the processes through which these outcomes can be achieved.

### Why?

Social exclusion is a social determinant of health (Marmot, 1999). For decades, it has been known that social networks are health protective (Berkman and Syme, 1979). Thus, reducing social exclusion can lead to greater social cohesiveness and better standards of health and reduce premature mortality (WHO Europe, 2003). Community design has the potential to create social inclusiveness. Designing facilities that encourage meeting, gathering and social interaction in communities could improve mental health and increase social networks.

Cycling, walking and public transport can stimulate casual social interaction on the streets as well as have health benefits for residents (Wood et al., 2008).

Australian research (West and Badham, 2008) into the principles for liveable communities suggest that healthy, safe and socially connected communities have strong networks and provide good access to the services and facilities required for daily living. A combination of physical and social elements creates a sense of place and belonging in a community. Physical attributes include design styles, street layout, scale of buildings, landmarks, vistas, meeting places, open space, designing for community safety.



Cycle friendly environments can promote social interaction, Sunshine Coast University Queensland  
Source: SGS Economics and Planning

Further, social connections and interaction can be enhanced through the physical layout of streets. A good layout that is legible and permeable enables more contact and movement choices in a community, and people can get to where they need to go more easily. Combining public transport systems with pedestrian and cycling access, is one important way in which this can be achieved.

Research also suggests there are higher levels of social capital in more walking- and cycling-friendly neighbourhoods (Leydon et al, 2008). However, there appears to be a threshold (Wood et al., 2008). For example, neighbourhoods that encourage recreational walking rather than transport walking create more social capital. Moreover, in local neighbourhoods where there are too many shops, social capital begins to decline. However, neighbourhoods where there is no local shop have lower social capital (Wood et al., 2008). This suggests that while there needs to be some shops at the local level to encourage social interaction, too many shops may encourage more traffic and people from outside the neighbourhood, which detracts from the creation of social interactions. It appears that pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods encourage more walking and cycling, allowing for more interactions between neighbours and increasing the sense of community in residents, thereby producing both mental and physical health benefits (Giles-Corti, 2006).



Shopping Centre, Blairgowrie Victoria  
Source: Planning Institute of Australia



### Encourage

The application of the *Healthy Spaces and Places* guidelines can assist in creating a more social inclusive community in two ways: through the infrastructure provided and through the processes used to develop that infrastructure. A socially inclusive approach would encourage:

- consultation with community, service providers, government agencies, and the private sector
- referring to current and relevant published guidelines about the type and level of facilities required in the community to support active living
- understanding the demographic and cultural composition and needs of existing and future residents
- providing accessible, well integrated and flexible community services and social infrastructure including meeting spaces
- planning well-located and integrated activity and shopping precincts that respond to the diverse needs of new and existing residents
- providing access to activity and shopping precincts by a variety of transport modes, including pedestrians, cyclists and public transport
- providing an interconnected network of pedestrian paths and on and off street cycle paths for easy and convenient access to key locations and destinations (especially schools and shops) within the community and adjacent neighbourhoods
- ensuring that there is active and passive surveillance over the public realm (adapted from West and Badham, 2008)
- creating walkable neighbourhoods and access to services and facilities that are designed for all users, including users with disabilities (WA Planning Commission, 2004)
- creating public open space that caters for multiple users (sports people through to walkers; children through to older adults)
- anticipating and avoiding conflicts between user groups through good design, such as between older adults and skate board users and cyclists and pedestrians
- planning for shared use of facilities such as ovals, community halls and meeting places to ensure a wide range of people can access facilities for active living and social connectedness, and
- providing a mix of housing types, tenures and densities as well as a mixture of land uses to encourage a diverse population.



Places for all ages enhance social interaction  
Botanic Gardens, Sunshine Coast Queensland  
Source: SGS Economics and Planning

### Rule of thumb

To create a socially inclusive community, design places that cater for multiple users and which encourage active lifestyles and social interaction.

### Avoid

- Designing public places that exclude specific users groups through poor design.
- Providing facilities that do not meet the needs of, or create conflicts between users.

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