



**Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens**

**Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector  
Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social Inclusion**

13 October, 2008

## **Speech**

# **Australia's Social Inclusion Agenda State of the Family 2008**

Anglicare Australia's Creative Tension, Parliament House, Canberra

Acknowledgements:

- Canon Ray Cleary AM
- Kasy Chambers
- Peter Quamby

I am delighted to launch Anglicare's State of the Family Report 2008 , the eight in this series, and congratulate Anglicare Australia for its work.

The title "Creative Tension: Australia's Social Inclusion Agenda" aptly reflects the challenging policy tensions that currently exist for the Rudd Labor Government.

We argue that after so many years of economic growth and prosperity that it is unacceptable that growing numbers of our citizens are finding it hard to make ends meet, many find it impossible to balance the pressures on their family life, others have disengaged from our society.

This is what our social inclusion agenda is all about. It is about breaking entrenched cycles of disadvantage and investing in policies and programs that are about making a significant difference in the lives of these people.

We are all challenged to think very differently in this agenda – because it is about seeking out the causes of social exclusion rather than only dealing with the fallout of that exclusion.

That's why we have focused so much of our early Social Inclusion work on prevention and early intervention in supporting families, those who are homeless, those with mental illness or living with

disability. We are balancing this approach with ensuring that we continue to provide support for those who are in crisis and those who are most vulnerable – the very clients that Anglicare works so effectively with and so passionately for.

Our Social Inclusion agenda is also about finding the time, resources and thought leadership to focus on strengthening our civil society.

Anglicare's Report places a strong lens on our Social Inclusion agenda and in doing so, raises key questions about market failure and the need to balance social, ethical and economic policies and practices. It highlights the precarious situation for many in our communities who live with an illusion of prosperity but who are struggling every day.

The Report also focuses our attention on the fragility of the current good times and the extent of the difficulties that may come from the current economic crisis. It highlights Australia's underinvestment in social infrastructure, housing and transport and challenges the Rudd government to acknowledge and address these issues as a matter of urgency.

Such a challenge couldn't be more focused than in the events of the last few months – bringing this issue sharply into the public debate.

It is our responsibility as a government to ensure that we do everything within our power to ensure that we continue to work for the common good and that we tackle this creative tension in a range of ways.

The Government welcomes the contribution, wisdom and experience of those organisations like Anglicare whose clients' stories are so vividly captured in State of the Families 2008. Anglicare's commitment to influencing the national social policy agenda is critical to ensuring we have robust policy thinking, strong advocacy for those who need it, and new ways of thinking about how to make our Social Inclusion agenda a reality.

Can I acknowledge too Peter Quamby and the support and contribution of Community Sector Banking who have partnered with Anglicare in the production of the Report. Community Sector Banking plays an important role in enhancing the capability and capacity of the community sector, through its financial products and the aggregation of capital.

I am honoured to launch the report this morning.

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