Questions on Notice –
Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB)

1.1 The Department of Health and Ageing reported to the committee that:
An approach is taken, certainly by our department, that recognises the interconnectedness and complexity of the social determinants of health through integrated approaches to the development and implementation of social policy and programs, both at the Commonwealth level but also across all levels of government. Key aspects of the approach include a number of things: firstly, strong governance arrangements. Some examples of those are the Australian Social Inclusion Board, the Social Policy and Social Inclusion Committee of Cabinet and also COAG's standing committees that look into these issues. (Committee Hansard, 23 November 2012, p. 34)

(a) You described in your submission the manner in which the ASIB tries to incorporate social inclusion principles across government. What in your view would be the best model to promote the social determinants of health agenda?

Like the social inclusion agenda, the social determinants of health are best promoted by encouraging collaboration, accountability and transparency across government.

The Australian Social Inclusion Board consults widely with all levels of government to connect knowledge and experience and best-practice in a range of policy areas, including health. The Board also regularly promotes the social inclusion agenda through engagement with departments, including presentations to department secretaries at the Secretaries' Committee on Social Policy, to keep social inclusion at the forefront of their agenda.

Social inclusion strategic change indicators which are reported on annually by Government departments, and which the Board was instrumental in developing, ensure accountability for the integration of social inclusion in policy and program planning and implementation. Reporting against the strategic change indicators in departmental annual reports allows for transparency and measurement of actions which contribute to the social inclusion agenda.

Levels of social inclusion in Australia are also measured through the landmark report; *How Australia is Faring*, first released in 2010, with the second edition published in 2012. These reports include a number of measures of social inclusion and health including the employment rate of people with disability, life expectancy and mental health. Measuring, reporting and evaluating such factors expand knowledge and understanding and are vital steps to promote the social determinants of health and the importance of social inclusion, across government and more broadly.

(b) Would you foresee the ASIB having a role in promoting the social determinants of health?

The Australian Social Inclusion Board's role is to provide advice to Government on the social inclusion agenda, and ways the Government can achieve better outcomes for the 5% most

disadvantaged in our community. This advice covers a range of priority areas, set by the Minister for Social Inclusion, which currently includes: service delivery reform and how services can better meet the needs of people facing barriers to inclusion; measurement and reporting of social inclusion indicators; place-based interventions to assist disadvantaged people; employment services for very disadvantaged job seekers; consolidating the body of knowledge around improving the financial capability of disadvantaged Australians; and providing advice to Government on how it can best respond to the emerging issue of older women and homelessness. Given the interconnectedness between health and disadvantage, many of these issues have the potential to promote the social determinants of health. Improvement in these areas would promote improved health. Where the Board's role in advising the Government on these priorities areas is relevant to the promotion of the social determinants of health, the Board would bring this to the attention of the Minister for Social Inclusion, who in turn could bring this to the Ministers of Health.

The Board promotes awareness and understanding of the social inclusion agenda in various public forums including; presentations at conferences, visits to place-based sites, the Australian Social Inclusion website, publication of Board meeting outcomes, participation in Social Inclusion Week activities, published articles, including editorial opinion pieces, and the contributions Board members make in the community through their roles and positions in the private, public or not-for-profit sectors. The Board's role in relation to the social determinants of health, and similar matters, is to highlight the importance of such issues within the broader framework of the social inclusion agenda.

(c) Do you think having a legislative framework, such as the South Australian 'Health in all Policies' agenda, would benefit the social inclusion agenda and the broader social determinants of health agenda?

The Australian Government's Social Inclusion Agenda is structured to provide guiding aspirations and approaches to achieve better outcomes for the most disadvantaged Australians. The Board has developed a set of social inclusion principles and a policy toolkit to assist policy makers and to ensure that the social inclusion agenda is embedded across Commonwealth agencies.

As part of the Social Inclusion Measurement and Reporting Framework, social inclusion strategic change indicators (SCIs) were developed in 2010 by Commonwealth agencies and were reviewed by the Australian Social Inclusion Board and the Secretaries' Committee on Social Policy. The SCI's have been reported in the 2011 and 2012 Annual Reports of the main Commonwealth social policy agencies. In practice, agencies have reported on a larger number of indicators than the 17 indicators that were agreed for reporting.

The development of a more formally structured framework, such as the South Australian approach, could introduce ambiguity into existing Commonwealth mechanisms and therefore detract from the established social inclusion narrative. It could also result in current measurement and reporting framework and social inclusion principles holding less currency.

A formal, legislative framework on top of the current system could be restrictive or burdensome on some parties working to achieve positive social inclusion outcomes.

(d) How does the ASIB board collaborate with counterparts in the States and Territories to deliver the social inclusion agenda?

The Australian Social Inclusion Board is foremost an advisory body to the Commonwealth Government on ways to achieve better outcomes for the most disadvantaged in our community. It is not a policy delivery agency. In developing its advice, the Board consults widely with the community, business, the not-for-profit sector, academics, advisory groups and all levels of government to connect better policy with the knowledge and experience of the research, business and community sectors.

The Board's collaboration with state and territory counterparts has included state and territory representatives attending Board meetings and consultations with relevant State, Territory and Commonwealth departments to provide advice to the Minister for Social Inclusion on collaborative efforts that forward the social inclusion agenda.

1.2 The World Health Organisation's Commission on Social Determinants of Health report 'Closing the Gap within a Generation' provided three key recommendations for governments:

- **Improve the conditions of daily life;**
- **Tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources; and**
- **Measure the problem, evaluation action, expand the knowledge base, develop a workforce that is trained in the social determinants of health, and raise public awareness about the social determinants of health.**

(a) Does ASIB have a view on the findings of the WHO report mentioned above?

The Board supports the recommendations of the WHO report, and considers that they are also relevant to the social inclusion agenda.

(b) Does ASIB consider that there is a need to raise awareness of the social determinants of health in Australia?

The Board favours greater awareness of the social determinants of health in Australia. Greater awareness, among both the public and policy makers, will ensure greater support for policies that address the social determinants of health. Nonetheless, awareness-raising by itself is unlikely to achieve the underlying policy goals. Changes are also needed in policy settings around infrastructure, service delivery and economic issues and the distribution of resources in Australian society. The Board believes that the social inclusion agenda already provides the framework to garner support for the more appropriate policy settings and investment which will address the underlying causes of inequality, in health and other exclusionary factors. A continued focus on the social inclusion priority groups and increased promotion of social inclusion, by all levels of government and across all sectors, will achieve promotion of the social determinants of health and the aspirations of the Government's social inclusion agenda.