

Adelaide Thinkers in Residence - A Model for Delivering Systemic Innovation

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In 2003, the Premier of South Australia, the Hon Mike Rann, MP, initiated a program he had envisioned whilst in opposition. The initiative 'Adelaide Thinkers in Residence' has been operating since that time. Each year the Premier invites up to four internationally renowned experts to come to the state for 2 - 6 months to help explore and find original solutions to issues and challenges.

The program has hosted fourteen Thinkers to date. Each appointment is aligned to objectives and targets of South Australia's Strategic Plan and residency activities are designed to deliver tangible benefits for the state in areas that have included health, education, social innovation, the arts, the environment, science, research and economic development. This includes transferring knowledge and skills; generating new ideas, programs, alliances and collaborations; building local capacity; developing industry; and providing world-class advice.

Over the past five years, Thinkers have helped South Australia position itself nationally and internationally as an innovative and dynamic community for living, working, investing and doing business. The Thinkers provide strategic advice to the residency partners who come from government, non-government, business, industry and community organisations.

Enduring Legacies

The ATIR program uses principles and practices based on the family of theories focussed on systems thinking, as the framework to build social and economic capital as well as robust adaptive capacity.

The approach recognises that complex organisations are non-linear and do not lend themselves to predictability. This program has been developed to encourage diversity and to support the development of resilient systems that can be flexible, responsive and adaptive.

In working to develop systemic change and innovation, the program supports the establishment of the following conditions, as illustrated in Figure 1.

- Development of rich, multi-dimensional relationships between participant organisations
- Congruence between agreed objectives and behaviour
- High trust as an essential characteristic of relationships
- Processes that take account of values and dispositions
- Support for innovation at the local level
- Results in 'soft' and 'hard' dimensions, including tangible, measurable benefits, such as new programs or resources and non-cognitive, social benefits, such as professional development or improved interpersonal skills.

Horizontal Impacts

The ATIR program uses a model of 'horizontal management' (Fitzpatrick, T. 2000) to support change. Partners contribute to the resourcing of the residency and participate collaboratively to design, develop and implement the objectives and program of the residency.

These horizontal partnership arrangements include the joint investment of financial, human and physical resources, as well as shared responsibility, authority and risk-taking.

This approach aims to strengthen economic and strategic benefit by enhancing both the Government and partners' abilities to deliver outcomes and outputs while sharing processes and credits. This also provides efficient pathways for achieving mutual goals. Partners undertake dual accountabilities in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions i.e. line management within the individual agency and across the partnership group.

The ongoing clarification of value sets across the partnership is consistently addressed through dialogue and the explicit articulation of shared meaning.

This partnership process attempts to break through silo structures to build new relationships, new ways of working, innovative practice and mutual benefit.

A testament to the success of the program is the continuing attraction of funding through partners and sponsors. Since its inception in 2003, 64 organisations have partnered in the ATIR program. This includes government agencies, from the local, state and commonwealth sectors, universities, industry and business.

Each Thinker provides a final report, with recommendations for Government and partner organisations, presenting strategic advice and guidance for work that continues after the residency.

In residencies that include more than one visit, the Thinkers commonly provide an interim report, delivered after the first visit. This identifies the key strategic areas for development and has been used to guide the work undertaken by the partner agencies between the residency visits. The development of interim reports sustains momentum and ensures that the Thinker's final recommendations have local commitment and traction.

Engaging the voice and influence of youth

In collaboration with the Office for Youth, teams of young employees (known as A-teams) have been provided with the opportunity to investigate issues associated with the Thinker's residency goals. Teams have worked with Rosanne Haggerty on issues of youth homelessness, with Dr Fraser Mustard to address early childhood development issues, with Dr Dennis Jaffe on succession in family business and with Dr Geoff Mulgan on social innovation. Indicating the success of this initiative, Thinkers have incorporated recommendations made by the A-Teams into their own final reports. All Thinkers' reports are available on the Adelaide Thinkers in Residence Website, and A-Team reports are available on the Office for Youth Website. This initiative places a youth lens on important policy issues and ensures that young people can influence decisions that affect the community.

Building Local Capacity

The process of attaching 'Project Catalysts' and research assistants to each Thinker is designed to increase the legacy of the residency through a capacity building program. Funding partners are provided with the opportunity to nominate an officer for selection for one of these Project Catalyst positions. The selected personnel accompany the Thinker throughout their program, providing professional support and local knowledge to the Thinker, while experiencing an 'immersion' professional development program themselves. Over the last seven residencies, twenty officers have undertaken this role. They have come from twelve different partner organisations that have provided the additional resources to support this aspect of the program.

Impacts from Residencies

Each residency has produced tangible benefits for the State. These legacies are demonstrated in changes across legislation, policy, programs, services and a broad range of aspects of work and life in the state.

For instance, the program has included a residency with Professor Stephen Schneider, a world-leading thinker on climate change from the US. Professor Schneider is a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which was awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. His residency led to the South Australian Government becoming one of only three jurisdictions in the world in 2007 to introduce and pass climate change legislation that sets real targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in our State.

Another Thinker, Rosanne Haggerty, is founder of New York's 'Common Ground' and her residency was designed to address issues of homelessness. As a result of her appointment, the Government of South Australia has invested \$11 million in a partnership with industry and local government to make available 100 inner city apartments for people who would otherwise be homeless. The housing also provides on-site support.

In March this year the Australian Government announced that Therese Rein has accepted the role as Patron of "Common Ground Australia" - a network of agencies seeking to deliver innovative homelessness services across the country.

The residency of scientist Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield included two visits during which time she launched a dozen science projects. One of these was to establish the 'RI Australia' in Adelaide. This is the first development of this nature in the 208-year history of the Royal Institution of Great Britain. The RI Australia will become a dynamic national hub of scientific endeavour and learning – for scientists, technologists and engineers as well as families, students, educators, media, government and industry.

Baroness Greenfield also initiated the establishment of the Australian Science Media Centre, a non-profit organisation that aims to increase the availability of evidence-based science by giving scientists more of a voice on important issues of the day. The activities of the Australian Science Media Centre (AusSMC) have contributed to at least 900 articles or programs dealing with Science in mainstream media outlets. This includes a 20% overseas coverage and an expanding database of over 1400 experts who are happy to talk to reporters when their field of expertise is in the news.

During her residency in 2007, Thinker Professor Ilona Kickbusch proposed a 'Health Lens' strategy to analyse health impacts of targets in South Australia's Strategic Plan. Working parties from across Government addressed this work. The targets selected as case studies included: Economic Growth, Work Life Balance, Healthy Weight, Ecological Footprint, Broadband Use, Regional Population Levels and Economic Disadvantage.

Following on from this work, the Health In All Policies Conference, held in November 2007, was led by the Department of Health in partnership with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The conference involved senior executives and strategic decision makers from across government and non-government to increase opportunities for joined up policy decision-making that will provide population health gain and assist in the successful delivery of South Australia's Strategic Plan. The Thinker is now profiling this work with the World Health Organisation.

A \$9 million bioscience incubator now in the final stages of construction in Thebarton SA is a result of the residency of Dr Maire Smith who focussed her appointment around bioscience.

The development of the PODMO initiative, by Adelaide company Kukan Studio was a result of the residency of UK company Blast Theory. PODMO is a new downloadable mobile phone application that allows access to event information eg special offers, ticket prices etc.

The residency of the current Thinker Professor Andrew Fearne is led by a partnership of 15 organisations including business, a Regional Development Board, universities and government. Professor Fearne's work as a Thinker has motivated and mobilised new relationships, new challenges and new ways of working. The field of possibility being generated by Professor

Fearne's work, and other articles in this edition will provide more information about this residency, is exciting. The Adelaide Thinkers in Residence website will provide updates about the residency program.

These and a broad array of other examples demonstrate that the Adelaide Thinkers in Residence program is delivering tangible benefits, fostering our knowledge economy, building on our reputation for innovation and bringing powerful change for individuals, for organisations, for government and for local communities. The program embeds world-class expertise in the strategic development and promotion of South Australia and builds local, national and international networks.

References

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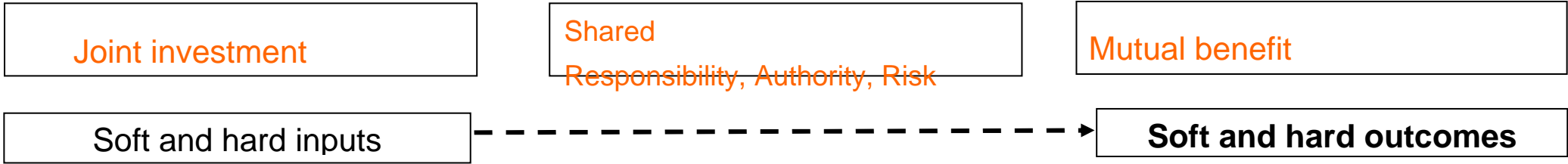
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Figure 1

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Inclusive practices embedded and catering for those affected but not involved

