Working on Systems to Improve Social Inclusion – *a starting point for the community*

"**SOCIAL INCLUSION MATTERS FOR ITSELF AND BECAUSE EXCLUSION IS TOO COSTLY."**

What is systems thinking?

Systems thinking approach: refers to engaging with the whole social system that contributes to changing the system, rather than developing single-issue activities and programs. This approach seeks to ask the right questions, to better understand the system in order to develop effective plans for action.

Things beyond our direct control influence our choices and our capacity to change, often these are social systems. To support people make change, we need to look at what we can do to change social systems to enable choice and support people to make changes as they choose.

Group model building (GMB): A collaborative process in which a group of people examine an issue of shared interest. The group shares their observations about the issue and looks for connections between these observations.

What has been discussed so far…

Social inclusion is an area of high priority for the Inner East Primary Care Partnership (IEPCP) and its partner organisations working in the Primary Prevention space.

The IEPCP worked with the Global Obesity Centre (Deakin University) to deliver a series of GMB workshops for partner organisations. Participants in these workshops used systems thinking to identify what systems lead to stronger social inclusion.

Applying the Social Inclusion Framework

Workshops were guided by IEPCP's Social Inclusion Framework, which identifies four dimensions of social inclusion: *Learn*, *Work*, *Engage* and *Have a Voice*. For the purpose of these workshops, we were particularly interested in *Engage* and *Have a Voice*. *Having a Voice* includes influencing decision making and exercising leadership, rather than people being told what has been decided once it has already happened. It would be uncommon that someone would *Have a Voice* without *Engaging*, but that *Engaging* was a much broader concept that included socialising, volunteering, using services, and generally being an active part of the community.
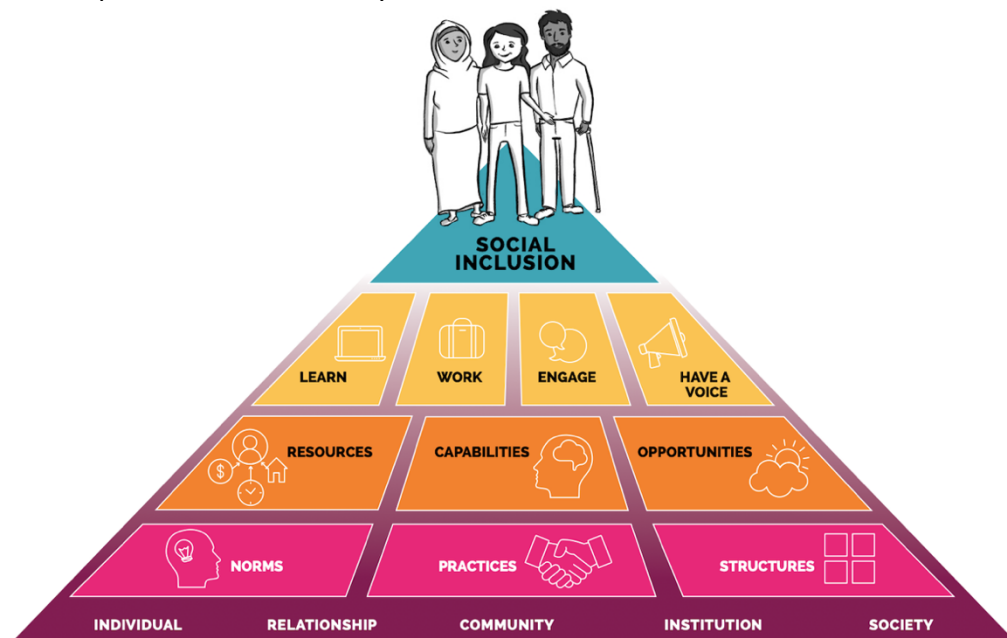
GMB reflections

The group was asked to respond to this question, *'what factors in our community influence whether everyone has the resources, opportunities and capabilities they need to Engage and Have a Voice?'*

Some key factors where participants saw a need for new or further action:

- Reach those in isolation and living with housing insecurity
- Enhance digital connection
- Identify oppressive systems that restrict unequal participation
- Build a culture of engagement and having a voice
- Provide physically accessible options of community participation

- Capture meaningful results and outcomes
- Capture diverse perspectives in the system to really understand where professionals should create most influence in the system
- Centre community voice and understand issues from their perspective
- Improve distribution methods that reach into communities

We want to hear from you about this issue:

Reflections

→ Do you agree with these ideas for further action?

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→ In your experience, are these factors important in your community?

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→ Do you have other ideas that are important to consider to support people to *Engage* and *Have a Voice* in your community?

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