Multiple cities, Australia:
StepOne: Community Cohesion
and Anti-Racism Toolkit[1]

Name of the policy: StepOne: Community Cohesion and Anti-Racism Toolkit

Start date: 2008 (resource created)
Completion date: Ongoing

CONTEXT

GOVERNMENTAL CONTEXT

National context

Australia is one of the world's most diverse nations, with its 22 million residents identifying with more than 270 ancestries and observing a wide variety of cultural and religious traditions. Indigenous people make up 2.5% of the total population and this percentage continues to increase. Amongst indigenous people, 89.6% identified as Aboriginal, 6.5% as Torres Strait Islander, and 3.9% as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ABS 2010).

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[1] The **Inclusive Cities Observatory** is a space for analysis and reflection on local social inclusion policies. It contains over sixty case studies on innovative policies for community development, access to basic services, gender equality, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty, among others. The initiative has been developed with the scientific support of Prof. Yves Cabannes from the University College of London (15 case studies) and a team of researchers from the Centre for Social Studies (CES) at the University of Coimbra, which has worked under the supervision of Prof. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (50 study cases). This Observatory aims to identify and investigate successful experiences that might inspire other cities to design and implement their own social inclusion policies.

The **Inclusive Cities Observatory** has been created by the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG. United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the global platform that represents and defends the interests of local governments before the international community and works to give cities more political influence on global governance. The **Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights** aims to contribute to building a common voice for the cities of UCLG in the areas of social inclusion, participatory democracy and human rights. It also aims to guide local governments in designing these policies and to that end, fosters political debates, the exchange of experiences and peer learning among cities around the world.

For more information: www.uclg.org/cisdp/observatory

A large-scale program of migration to Australia began at the end of World War II, when there was a desperate shortage of labour and a growing belief that substantial population growth was essential for the country's future. Australia's population at that time was around 7 million, with almost 90% locally born. Since 1945, more than 7 million people have come to Australia as permanent migrants, and this has had a very significant effect on the country's population. In 2009, one-quarter of Australia's people were born overseas (5.8 million), which continues the historical trend of a high proportion of overseas-born among Australia's population. People born in the United Kingdom were the largest group of overseas-born residents, followed by those born in New Zealand, China, India, and Italy. The most significant numbers of recent migrants have come from, in this order: New Zealand, United Kingdom, India, China, Philippines, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Burma.

While English is the national language, the cultural diversity within Australia's population has resulted in almost 400 languages, including Indigenous languages, being spoken across the nation. Just over half of these are languages other than English spoken by migrants who have settled in Australia from all over the world.

While the overall population of Australia is largely concentrated in capital cities, this tendency is even more pronounced for migrants. Four-fifths of the overseas-born population lived in capital cities, compared with three-fifths of people born in Australia. Australia's Indigenous population is distributed differently, with less than one third living in capital cities. Other cultural indicators further highlight the contrast between Australia's urban and rural residents. In 2006, 90% of people affiliated with a non-Christian religion lived in a capital city. Similarly, 88% of people who spoke a language other than English at home also lived in a capital city. Of the capital cities, Sydney and Perth had the highest proportions of overseas born residents—more than one-third each. Hobart had the lowest proportion of overseas-born Australians (13%).

Governmental decentralization context
There are three levels of government in Australia: federal (national), state or territory, and local. Local government is not mentioned in the Australia constitution. The ALGA, the highest-level body for local government in Australia, is currently advocating for this to be changed so that the significant role played by local government in contributing to national wellbeing across a range of dimensions, including social, economic, and democratic, is properly acknowledged.

Local government powers are determined by state or territory authority with chief responsibilities including community facilities, road maintenance, planning and development approvals, and local services such as waste disposal. Services are financed by property tax and grants from state and federal levels. Local governments in Australia until quite recently have been caricatured as being concerned only with the 'three Rs' – Roads, Rates, and Rubbish. However, recent years have seen federal and state governments increasingly devolving powers onto local governments, at the same time as local government's own sense of its responsibilities to residents expands. This greater capacity is also attributable to an ongoing program of amalgamation of local government that has taken place across the nation over the past century. This rationalization of resources has led to larger Councils having more diverse communities and larger rates base which, in turn, has resulted in greater efficiency and increased capacity for specialist services, staffing, and programs.

There are currently 560 Councils across Australia with very diverse character and operations. For example, Murchison Shire in West Australia has a population of 110, while Brisbane City Council has a population of 1,027,847. Peppermint Grove Council in Perth covers an area of 2 km^2, while the East Pilbara Shire in West Australia covers 371,696 km^2.

Institutional level of policy development: Submunicipal, Municipal, District, Region, Provincial, and Intercommunal (multiple communities). The *StepOne* Toolkit has been designed primarily for local government, but also has relevance for smaller and larger governance and policy domains, from submunicipal up to state (provincial) government. The majority of case studies listed are focused on Municipal level initiatives, but there are some case studies that relate to other levels, Submunicipal, Municipal, District, Region, Provincial, and Intercommunal (multiple communities). For example, the *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Women's Leadership* Project involved three local government areas responding to the under-representation of CALD women in leadership and decision-making roles within their communities. The *East and West in Harmony* project, in contrast, aimed to stimulate volunteering across the state of young people from a particular cultural background.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

While there is great cultural and linguistic diversity amongst the citizens of Australia, many people from CALD (cultural and linguistically diverse) backgrounds experience barriers in establishing a satisfactory way of life in Australia. The barriers are particularly significant for people from non-English speaking backgrounds. These barriers include employment: for example, during a time of record high employment, 36% of recent migrants reported having experienced difficulty finding their first job for reasons such as a lack of Australian work experience or references (56%), language difficulties (35%), and lack of local contacts and networks (29%). Migrants from the main English-speaking countries were more likely to have a job than those born in other countries (88% compared to 76%).

Numerous policy and funding initiatives are undertaken by three levels of government (national, state, and local) to promote community harmony and cohesion between people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In February 2011, the federal government launched Australia's new Multicultural Policy, 'People of Australia', to reaffirm the importance of a culturally diverse and socially cohesive nation. This policy is supported by a national initiative, the 'Diversity and Social Cohesion Program', which funds a program of community grants to deal with cultural, racial, and religious intolerance. Similar funding programs are also provided by state governments, such as the Victorian State Government Multicultural Commission's grants for Multicultural Festivals and Events, and the Victorian Community Support Grants that aim to assist the building of stronger, more active, and inclusive neighbourhoods and communities.

Local government is the level of government that has the closest and most direct connection with its populace. Councils across Australia play an important role in providing for and bringing together culturally and linguistically diverse communities, although there are varying degrees of response to cultural diversity in systems and service delivery. Most Councils have a staff member with designated responsibility for multicultural services and policy development. These

positions are configured differently, however, with some Councils having one or more designated multicultural officers, CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse community) planners, or Access and Equity Officers. In other Councils, the role is combined with other functions addressing social issues such as indigenous or disability access or in the broader context of a community development or social planning. The emphasis in individual Councils may be largely related to the very different rates of diversity, and the size and capacity of Councils across metropolitan, regional, and rural areas. For example, in the City of Fairfield, an inner suburban area of Australia's largest city, Sydney, 53% of the 95,343 residents were born overseas. In contrast, in Yarrabah Shire in regional north Queensland, 97% of the population of 2,700 people identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

In the state of Victoria, the highest-level body for local government, the Municipal Association of Victoria, has a dedicated position with a focus on CALD issues, but this position is not matched in other states.

There is significant interdependence between the various levels of government, and with non-government actors in the area of social cohesion and multicultural policy and service delivery. As a result, many initiatives, including case studies listed in the *StepOne* resource that are located at the nexus of culture (cultural diversity) and social policy (social inclusion and participation), are spearheaded by community organizations rather than governments. There are a number of initiatives around the nation to encourage a more even spread of cultural diversity, both for the benefit of the receiving population and the CALD communities. For example, some programs of refugee resettlement in regional areas of Australia have been led by churches, with the support of industry, local government, community organizations, and local citizens, each recognizing the value in diverse and welcoming communities.

COMPREHENSIVE NARRATIVE

Description of the policy

StepOne is a centralized website-based resource on Australian local government good practice on multicultural 'community cohesion' (http://www.stepone.org.au/about-stepone.aspx). The website has eight sections:

- About *StepOne*: an introduction to the resource
- Community Cohesion: this page offers a definition and description of principles of community cohesion from Australia and the U.K.
- Where to Begin: this page describes the steps in undertaking a community cohesion project with a series of references, including some about indicators
- Good Practice Guide: this page describes capacities that need to be built and guiding principles for community harmony projects
- Partnerships and Funding: this page provides ideas for the development of partnerships and obtaining funding from government and philanthropic sources
- Research Reports: this page provides material on research in the field of community cohesion, including an introduction to contact theory
- Useful Websites: this page lists useful websites and resources under seven headings: Local Government and Multiculturalism, Access and Equity in Local Government, Anti-

racism Training and Resources, State and Federal Government sites for Multiculturalism, Useful Community Cohesion Resources, Media Advocacy, and Other International Sites of Interest

- Case studies: this page provides a detailed information about case studies from all around Australia that have been selected as best practice examples of community cohesion projects; 48 case studies are currently listed and new suggestions are invited. Case studies are categorized under the following headings:

  - Anti-racism and myth busting
  - Conflict resolution
  - Connections between communities
  - Integration, mentoring, and social inclusion
  - Crisis intervention
  - Public arts and creative interventions
  - Reciprocity and working together
  - Town centre and other shared space projects
  - Other

Case studies were selected by the project co-ordinator after a nationwide open invitation for submissions, primarily from local Councils. While few of the initiatives had been independently evaluated as to their impact, a careful selection was made of those considered likely to be have been effective in achieving community cohesion or ameliorating racism. Project staff determined the likely effectiveness of the activities by comparing them with information from the literature. The final selection of case studies seemed strong across a number of areas. Each case study was chosen to exemplify an aspect of practice described in the relevant research. Some proposed case studies were rejected because they were operating on such a small scale that it was considered that they might not have had any effect.

The case studies reflect a great diversity of approaches in attempts to stimulate or implement community cohesion. They are intended to encourage evidence-based practice and to inspire Councils and other undertaking community cohesion initiatives to be more ambitious, innovative, and successful in their work.

The cases listed in the resource range from small-scale activities with impacts anticipated at a very local level to large-scale international research projects with a strong policy focus. *The Community Comics Project*, for example, sought to enable people to make their own comics as a means of expression, to tackle issues and produce information for the creation of communal harmony. The *International Intercultural City* project, in contrast, explored the institutional barriers and opportunities to maximizing economic benefits; considered the urban planning needs of cities with culturally diverse demographics; and aimed to provide guidance for future policy on diversity and wealth creation in cities.

Background / Origins
The content for the StepOne website was developed by Dr. Amanda Wise *from the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion at Macquarie University, New South Wales, Australia.* Dr. Wise first conceptualized the idea as she worked on another project about diversity issues at Ashfield Council in NSW, which has a very diverse population. The need for a resource to assist that

Council and others in the development of approaches to build better relations between communities became apparent. The researcher observed that Councils were predominantly undertaking small-scale 'feel good' projects, often traditional offerings such as multicultural festivals. Few Councils were thinking bigger or long term, and they were mostly working in isolation, with each council creating their own projects or struggling to come up with good ideas. There was little use of an evidence base or research in the development of new and existing programs, and no well-established vehicle for sharing successes and challenges.

The federal Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA, now renamed the Department of Immigration and Citizenship) supported the establishment and management of the website. At the time, DIMIA had a strong strategic focus on local government as the best site for community cohesion initiatives. Perhaps driving this were a series of unpleasant events in local communities that came within the Department's remit. One of these that had national impact was a series of riots in the Sydney suburb of Cronulla, involving young men from different cultural backgrounds engaging in very anti-social behaviour in busy public places. DIMIA was also aware of the very small scale of many of local Councils' current endeavours, and the difficulty of them making any impact without a more significant input of resources. Its new partnerships funding program sought to stimulate nationally significant projects with practical application that were developed using an evidence base. The *StepOne* website was considered likely to provide information to support Councils and organizations in the development of such initiatives.

After the website was completed, a nationwide promotional campaign was undertaken. Every Council in Australia received printed and electronic information about the resource, articles were written for appropriate local government publications, and information sessions were held in each capital city staff for local government with this portfolio. The support of relevant staff of local government organizations, including high-level bodies in each state, was enlisted to maximize ongoing use from their members and stakeholders.

Policy objectives
StepOne was developed to provide guidance and practical resources to Councils and community groups interested in implementing community cohesion initiatives. It was intended to provide an evidence base for local government across Australia, and to assist Councils to develop more informed practice and to build links with others doing related work.

The site features downloadable 'best practice' case studies covering a range of communities and issues, especially those which:

- **Reduce racism,** intolerance, and negative stereotypes
- Build positive and sustainable **relationships between communities**
- Get communities working together and **interacting**
- **Deal with the 'difficult stuff'** of living together, not just soft multiculturalism
- Move **beyond the 'multicultural festival'** model (food, dance, etc.)
- Show us how to **live in harmony**, making the most of our racial, cultural, social, and religious diversity.

The project developed as project leaders had anticipated, with the final version of *StepOne* closely matching the original conception.

Chronological development and implementation of the practice
The *StepOne* website was developed out of an earlier research project on a related topic. A pilot stage of the resource was tested successfully and then, over the course of 2008, the full website was put together by a small university-based research team. Since that time, *StepOne* has been updated when funding allows. A small grant in 2011 supports the employment of a research assistant who will refresh the site and add in some new case studies to keep it an active and topical resource.

Agents involved
The development of the StepOne resource was guided by a steering committee of contributors from throughout Australia who had specialist expertise and significant professional reputations in the area of community cohesion and local government. These included representatives from federal and local government, academics, and a practitioner. Individuals involved were: Beth Cotterill from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship; Rolf Fenner from the Australian Local Government Association; Marcia Coelho from the City of Melville, Western Australia; Lindy Drew from Queensland's LAMP program; Judith Robertson from the City of Charles Sturt, South Australia; and Dr. Jan Ali from Macquarie University. The diversity of the steering group assisted in obtaining engagement from different sectors and Councils across the country, including the nomination of case studies from a range of locations. It also ensured a wide distribution network. The resource continues to be promoted by staff of local government representative *bodies who have a professional development role for this sector.*

Beneficiaries
The *StepOne* website was primarily aimed at local government staff who have issues of community cohesion within their remit. These include multicultural or CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse community) planners, Access and Equity Officers, social planners, and community engagement officers. Other potential users of the site included other levels of government and schools, churches, and community groups who were interested in community cohesion issues. The resource was developed for an audience of practitioners, rather than academics, so content and language was shaped to suit that target market.

Over the time that the website has been live, the project team has received feedback indicating that users were as predicted, primarily local government but also schools, community groups, and churches. Hits to the website are monitored, and they continue from all around Australia, although they have decreased since the project launch and the first extensive promotional campaign in 2008/09.

Participation processes implemented
Most of the case studies discuss participatory processes. The wide range of case examples included in the resource, however, makes it difficult to synthesize these approaches here. They range from informal conversations between individuals in the *Living Library* project, to group discussions in the *Women Speak Out* project, to large-scale community celebrations such as the *Kingston Carnival*. The *Living Library* project, for example, was a special event that aimed to bring people together through one-to-one conversations. Visitors to Lismore's *Living Library*

were ordinary community members from all walks of life and different ethnic and cultural backgrounds who 'borrow' a 'living book' for an informal, half-hour conversation. Evaluation of this project indicted that it was effective in achieving community participation, challenging negative stereotypes, and building social cohesion. It also inspired similar activities in other communities. In a different type of participation, the Football United project sought to assist young refugees in their immigration and integration to Australia by providing a supportive and enjoyable environment through a soccer development program. This involved the participation of current club members and young refugees.

There were several listed case studies in which the project sought to impact on local government policy and action. Griffith City Council's *Lifecycle* project sought to bring people together and to establish links within and between the sub-communities that form the local community. The results of the project included the formation of a stronger network of agencies and service providers to ensure greater service delivery, interagency referrals, and unity in programming with respect to community connectedness and cohesiveness. The outcomes for this project also informed development of the council's *Social and Community Plan* and *Cultural Plan*.

The *Fraser Coast Partners Against Racism* project sought to improve race and ethnic relations in rural areas by engaging influential community leaders. The project's initiatives to promote that change included a list of strategies for strengthening harmony and a training kit to provide a basis for local forums to be held by rural community development officers and LGA staff. The largest council in Australia, Brisbane City Council, took the lead in the *Hand in Hand* project to address racism and make Brisbane a more friendly place. The project sought to advise and inform people from a range of different cultural backgrounds about the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland, the different types of discrimination and where they can lodge a complaint if they have been discriminated against.

The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder's *Reconciliation Committee* was set up to improve relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups through recognition and respect. This is a formal committee of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder Council created under the provisions of the Local Government Act, and amongst the first of its kind in Australia. It is comprised of representatives from a number of community and public sector organizations who make recommendations to Council regarding issues that relate to Indigenous people. Ashfield City Council instigated its *Community Harmony* project in an effort to create a welcoming atmosphere in its multicultural town centre. The project built relationships with mostly Chinese shopkeepers and aimed to draw more non-Chinese into Chinese owned shops. As a result of the project, this Council developed some new policy and practice initiatives around management of local shops, including the support of a dedicated staff officer to work on continuing initiatives.

Institutionalization processes
StepOne is a freely available on-line resource toolkit. There are no policies or other requirements for practitioners, planners, or decision-makers to use it to inform their work. Its use relies on the relevant people being aware of the resource and finding material in it that is useful and relevant to their context. Its ongoing usefulness also relies on stakeholders being active contributors so that it stays topical and relevant and broad enough in scope to be useful.

Financing

The Australian Government through the then Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs provided the initial funds of AUS$100,000. This paid for a project assistant, website design and development, and the national road shows and marketing campaign. Macquarie University funded the time of one researcher over a year to develop the content and establish the site. The Australian Human Rights Commission *contributed to ongoing maintenance of the site in 2010, and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has provided a small grant of AUS$5,000 to cover some research assistance for maintenance in 2011.*

Key results and achievements

The project's co-ordinator believes that the main achievements of the *StepOne* resource are its positive contribution to the development of professional practice around community cohesion, and stronger connections between local government professionals who have responsibility for this area. The website filled a gap in the provision of information and sharing and peer learning that had not previously been available to Councils and their staff, and promoted discussion and a move towards informed and evidence-based practice.

From the perspective of the project co-ordinator, the resource seems still relevant and of use to the target group. Informal feedback from major stakeholders, such as users and high-level representative bodies, indicates that the resource has contributed to improved practice. Both contributors and users of the resource appreciate its offerings. Organizations that provided case studies enjoy the opportunity to share their work and are pleased to have their achievements profiled. Some of the site's visitors have been inspired by the published case studies to implement similar initiatives, informed by others' experience. Some of the examples were adopted more broadly, such as the *Living Library* initiative, which was taken up by several other Councils in different areas of Australia.

Main obstacles

A challenge for a web-based resource like *StepOne* is the difficulty of keeping it live and in front of potential users once funding has run out. For this website to remain a useful and attractive resource, it needs to be continually updated, with listings of new research, resources, and case studies. This requires the active engagement of a staff member who keeps abreast of research developments and has an active process of contacting Councils and inviting them to submit case studies. It also needs a continuing promotional campaign to ensure that those who might benefit from it are aware of it. Ongoing encouragement of Councils is also required to recognize the need for evidence-based practice and therefore maintain the demand for such a resource; to cultivate a culture of evaluation, thus leading to initiatives whose effectiveness is known; and to establish planning and service delivery mechanisms that are responsive to findings of evaluation.

A limitation of the *StepOne* resource is a lack of evaluation, both of the initiative itself and of many of the projects listed as best practice case studies. No formal evaluation of the impact of the website on the effectiveness of local community cohesion initiatives was undertaken, largely because there was no component of the project funding for evaluation. Neither have many of the listed initiatives been evaluated for their impact. This is largely because there is not, as yet, a strong practice of evaluation of impacts of completed activities in this field of local

government's endeavours. As well, most often there are financial constraints; most of the listed projects were funded so modestly that all resources were used up in the implementation phase.

The *StepOne* initiative itself did not have any capacity to offer formal evaluation, although efforts were made to complement information provided in the written case studies through interviews of project managers and other stakeholders. In any case, most of the projects had been well and truly completed by the time they came to the attention of *StepOne* researchers, which would have challenged any efforts to formally evaluate their impact.

The project co-ordinator also has the view that even if an effort was made to evaluate projects, the impacts would be difficult to determine with any degree of certainty, especially for one-off public events like multicultural festivals. Challenges for evaluation include the difficulty of contacting all the people attending, and gauging how much impact a single activity has on attitudes and perceptions. The impact of initiatives may be cumulative, having a gradual effect over a period of time, especially if there are a number of initiatives being undertaken in a specific area that all possibly contribute to change.

Replicability or adaptation of policy elsewhere
The model of the *StepOne* website could easily be replicated in other countries where such a resource does not yet exist. A similar initiative with an international scope, IBIS (Integration: Building Inclusive Societies), has recently been developed by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). *StepOne* is listed on its website (www.unaoc.org/communities/migrationintegration/)

Recommendations
In Australia, the national policy imperative for harmonious multicultural communities and local government's mandate to provide services that meet the specific needs of and address issues of concern for local communities support the existence of such a resource. A resource like *StepOne* website would presumably be equally useful in other cities where community cohesion is identified as a priority for action by local government and civil society.

However, absolute judgments about the contribution of the *StepOne* project or the best practice case studies listed are limited by the lack of evaluation. The project does seem to have made a valuable contribution given the relatively unformed state of practice in this emerging field, particularly given the researchers' careful consideration in developing the resource and selection of case studies using alignment with evidence-based practice as a criteria. Evidence of its usefulness includes national use of the resource, positive feedback from stakeholders and users, and the influence on practice as evidenced by some case examples that were adopted nationally after their promotion on the site.

The major difficulty with this project is that of sustainability, as project funding runs out. Without ongoing input, the resource will gradually become less useful and less used. This difficulty could perhaps be avoided if the project were housed from the beginning in an organization that had an ongoing interest in both areas (local government and community cohesion), a mandate to continue the work, and staff available to continue progress with it.

SUMMARY

StepOne: Community Cohesion and Anti-Racism Toolkit is a website-based resource on good practice on multicultural community cohesion developed for Australian local government. *StepOne* was developed to provide guidance, practical resources, and an evidence base to assist Councils and community groups across Australia be more informed in their practice and build links with others doing related work. The website has nine pages that provide information about principles of community cohesion, establishing a project, good practice, development of partnerships and obtaining funding, relevant research, and useful websites.

The resource lists 48 case studies from all around Australia and overseas as best practice examples. They are categorized under the headings: anti-racism and myth busting, conflict resolution, connections between communities, integration, mentoring and social inclusion, crisis intervention, public arts and creative interventions, reciprocity and working together, and town centre and other shared space projects. They cover a range of communities and issues, especially those that were implemented to:

- reduce racism, intolerance, and negative stereotypes;
- build positive and sustainable relationships between communities;
- get communities working together and interacting;
- deal with the 'difficult stuff' of living together, not just soft multiculturalism;
- move beyond the 'multicultural festival' model (food, dance, etc.); and
- show us how to live in harmony, making the most of our racial, cultural, social, and religious diversity.

StepOne was primarily aimed at local government staff who work with issues of community cohesion. Other potential users of the site included other levels of government and schools, churches, and community groups. The resource was first developed in 2008 and in 2011, is an ongoing project with new content being added as staff resources allow. *The Australian Federal Government provided the majority of the project's funds, t*hrough the then Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. Other* support was provided by Macquarie University's *Centre for Research on Social Inclusion and the* Australian Human Rights Commission*.

Most of the case studies discuss participatory processes. These ranged from one on one conversations between individuals in the *Living Library* project, to group discussions in the *Women Speak Out* project, to large scale community celebrations like the *Kingston Carnival. StepOne* is a freely available on-line resource toolkit. There are no policy or other requirements for practitioners, planners, or decisions makers to use it.

The main achievements of the *StepOne* resource are (a) its contribution to the development of professional practice around community cohesion and (b) stronger connections between local government professionals who have responsibility for this area. The website filled a gap in the provision of information and sharing and peer learning that had not previously been available to Councils and their staff. It promoted discussion and a move towards informed and evidence-based practice.

The most significant challenge for a web-based resource like *StepOne* is the difficulty of keeping it live and in front of potential users once funding has run out. For this website to remain a useful and attractive resource, it needs to be continually updated with listings of new research, resources, and case studies. A limitation of the *StepOne* resource is a lack of evaluation, both of the initiative itself and the projects listed as best practice case studies. No formal evaluation of the impact of the website resource on the effectiveness of local community cohesion initiatives was undertaken, largely because there was no component of the project funding for evaluation. Neither had most of the listed initiatives been evaluated for their impact. Nevertheless, information that is available indicates that both the resource and the case studies seem to have had a significant positive impact on the field of professional practice around community cohesion.

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Acknowledgements / Credits
This case was researched and written by Kim Dunphy of the Cultural Development Network, Melbourne, Australia, under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Duxbury at the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal, in 2011.

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