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Complex problems require courageous solutions

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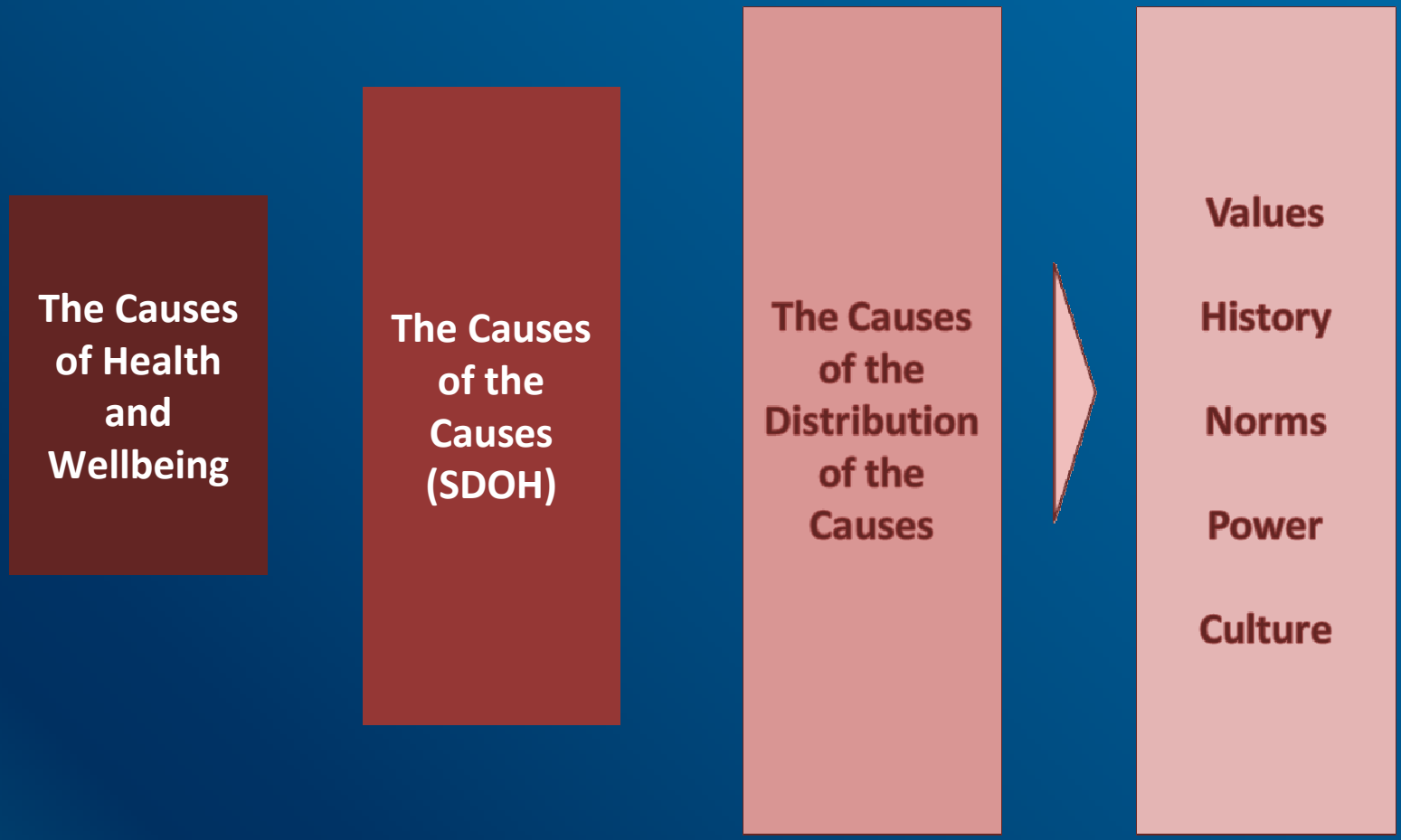
Legacy of the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health



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I will be speaking based on my experience of using HIA as a process and a method to influence public policy

It is based on an understanding that HIA and HIAP are guided by broader societal values.

These may include:

- Democracy
- Justice and Equity
- Fairness
- Transparency
- Health
- Sustainability

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We need to marry this understanding with the fact that Productivity and Economics are also becoming drivers for health improvement:

"that improving health is essential to increasing workforce participation and productivity and improving the capacity of all citizens to fully participate socially and economically. Improved health is an investment in future prosperity in the same way that school education, industrial research and roads are investments in the future. Without improved health we cannot lift participation in the workforce by many underrepresented groups and lift productivity."

Business Council of Australia 2008. Fit for the Job: Adapting to Australia's New Health Care Challenges, Submission to the Australian National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, p2.

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It also brings in new constituencies - we're working with the Heart Foundation, Rio Tinto, Oxfam, VACCHO, Shell, the International Council on Mining and Metals the remote Aboriginal community of Goodooga, local governments and many government departments.

Short term on HIA and long term on many different approaches to HIAP

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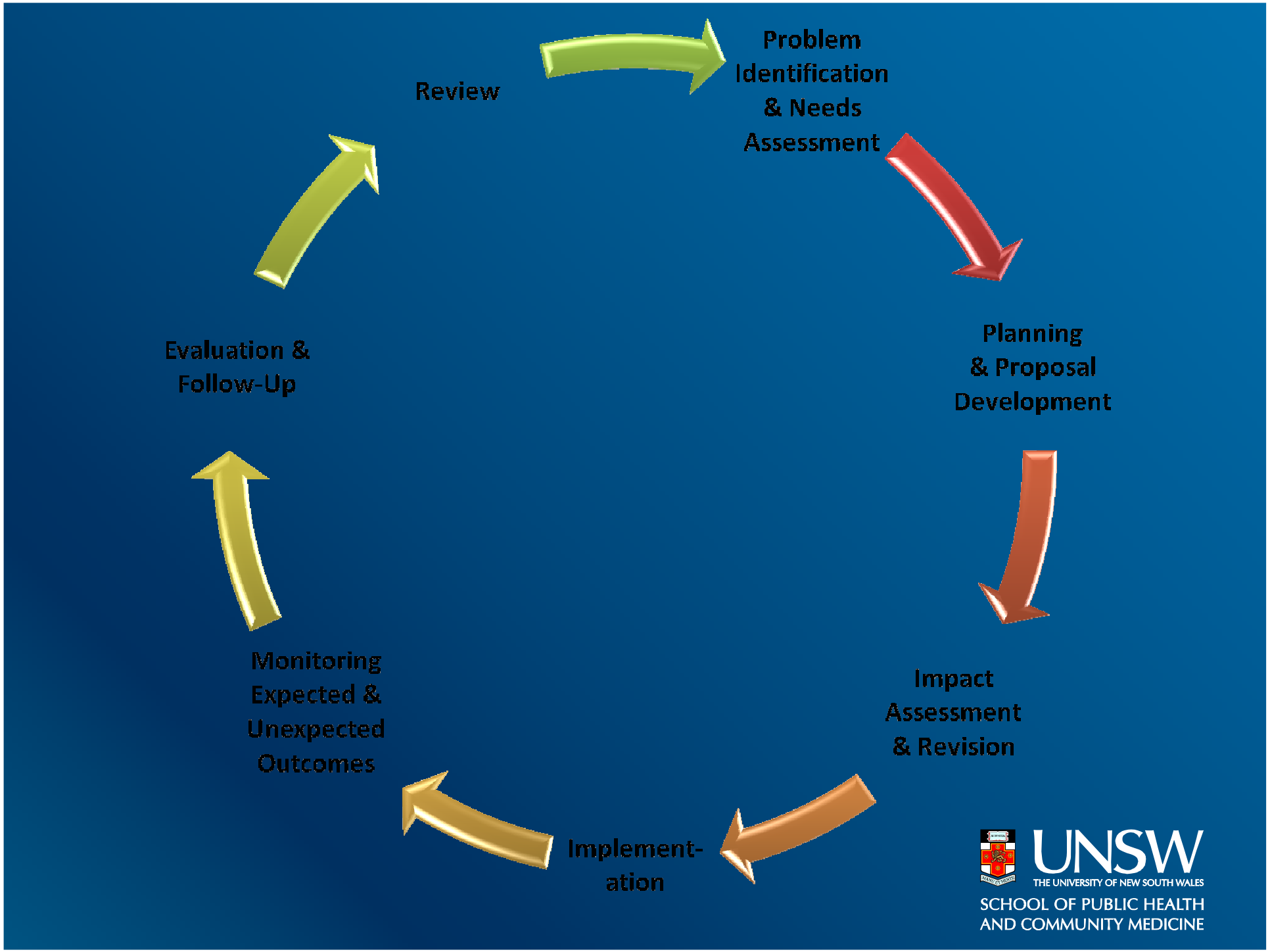

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Purpose	HIA	Health Lens
Mandated	✔	✔
Decision-Support	✔	✔
Advocacy	✔	
Community led	✔	

We need to do what will work

Harris-Roxas B, Harris E. (2010) *Differing Forms, Differing Purposes: A typology of health impact assessment*, Environmental Impact Assessment Review. doi:10.1016/j.eiar.2010.03.003

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Beyond improved policy what are we trying to achieve?

- **Technical learning**, which involves searching for technical solutions to fixed objectives;
- **Conceptual learning**, which involves redefining goals, problem definitions and strategies; and
- **Social learning**, which emphasises dialogue and increased interaction between those involved (distinct from the concept of social learning described in the psychology literature)

Glasbergen, P. (1999). Learning to Manage the Environment. Democracy and the Environment: Problems and Prospects. In W. Lafferty and J. Meadowcroft. Cheltenham, Edward Elgar: 175-193.

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What does this look like in practice?

- HIA of the Australian Northern Territory Emergency Response
- Australian Indigenous Doctor's Association, six affected communities (many very remote), a panel of experts and a series of stakeholder interviews
- Took almost 2 years and a large part of this involved building community trust and agreement to recommendations, ethics approval from three panels
- Rethinking dimensions of health

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Selected indicators of					
Physical Health	**Psychological Health**	**Social Health**	**Social Wellbeing**	**Spirituality**	**Cultural Integrity**
• premature mortality • morbidity • self-reported health • behavioural risks to health - alcohol and other substance misuse, poor nutrition, smoking, obesity, • physical inactivity, interpersonal violence use of health care services - preven tive and curative services (e.g. immunisation, ear health, and health checks)	• anxiety and depression • Suicide • Stress • trans-generational trauma, cumulative trauma • freedom from stigma, shame, discrimination • freedom from institutionalised racism	• number of new houses built • number of new houses allocated to Aboriginal community members • number of houses meeting national quality standards • number of school places, teachers • opportunities for employment • number and location of health services • number, qualifications, and location of health workforce • number, location of police & other	• Autonomy – personal and collective • Opportunities for social inclusion • Participation in social decision making and social action • Discrimination • Trust (in other people and in governments and their services, e.g. health, justice and housing)	• recognition and respect for Aboriginal people, world views, knowledge, values and aspirations • Aboriginal world views incorporated into policy development and implementation • alienation and despair	• Evidence of having taken back from government agencies certain rights of self-government • Steps taken to secure Aboriginal title to traditional lands • Degree of community control of services • Official cultural facilities to help preserve and enrich cultural lives, including recognition and promotion of Aboriginal languages

The HIA predicts that

" the intended health outcomes.. are unlikely to be fully achieved through the NTER measures. It predicts that it will leave a negative legacy on psychological and social wellbeing, on the spirituality and cultural integrity of the prescribed communities. However it may be possible to minimise or mitigate these negative impacts if the Australian and NT governments commit to and invest in taking the steps necessary to work in respectful partnerships with Aboriginal leaders and organisations."

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Did the HIA have an impact?

- Learning across all three areas
- Intervention recognised SDOH but not the critical forces driving the distribution of SDOH and the values needed to drive the solution:
- Democracy
- Justice and Equity
- Fairness
- Transparency
- Health
- Sustainability

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In conclusion:

A focus on values will be difficult and contested, and bureaucrats will find it hard to sell...

But only acting on the social determinants in the absence of discussions on values may give permission for inequity and injustice to persist.

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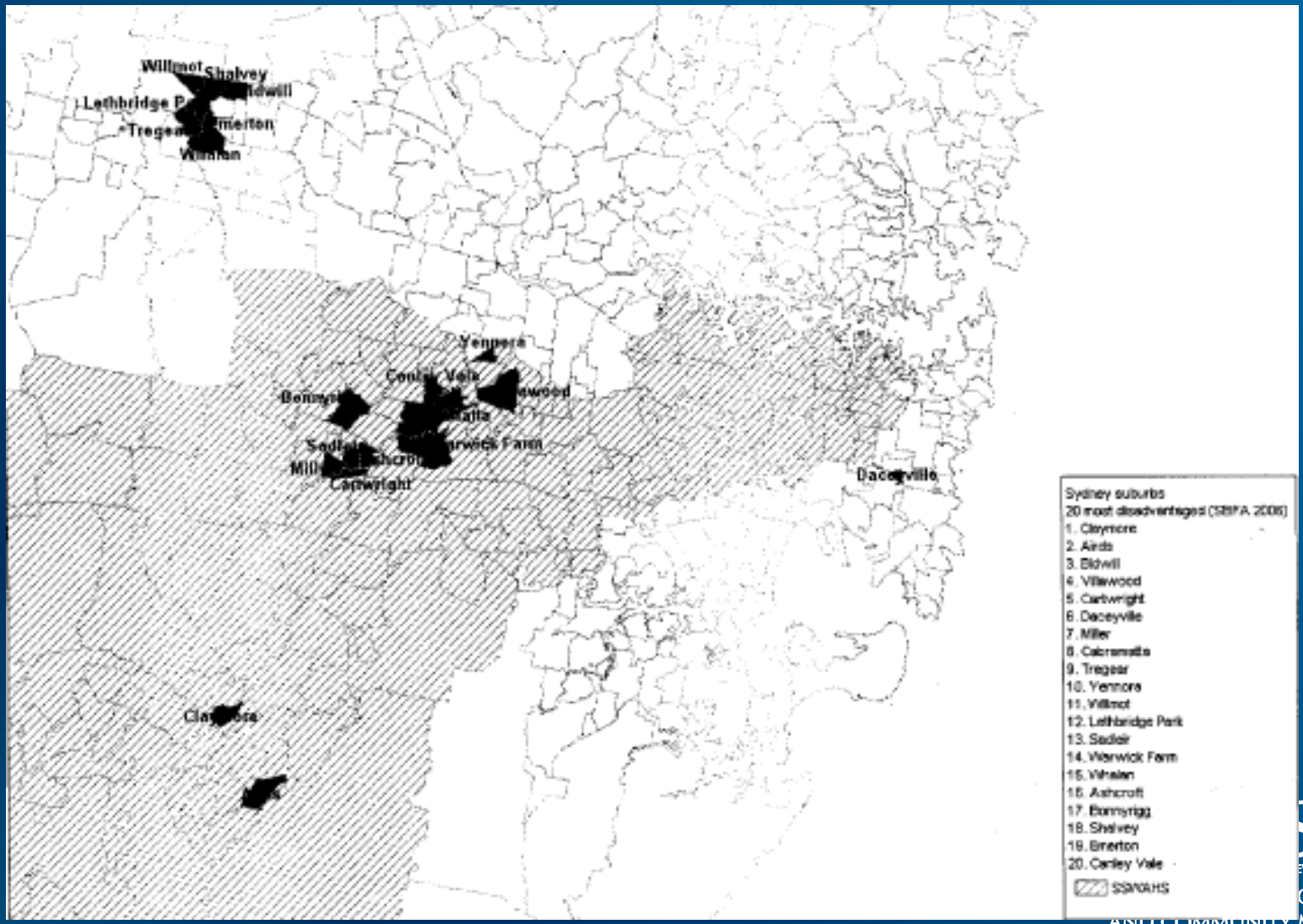
The New Plan for Compulsory Income Management



Thank you and safe journey home

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