

2020 Summit

I was there.

"Have your say, have your voice heard and make a difference for small community organisations!!" were the words from my cousin and brother who passed me the application form for the 2020 Summit. My attendance at the Summit was mainly due to their encouragement and also to staff at my organisation who helped me write the application.

A thousand participants attended the Summit and we were divided into 10 streams. I was in the Strengthening Communities, Supporting Families and Social Inclusion stream. As participants we had the opportunity to introduce ourselves to each other in the two weeks leading up to the Summit through a collaborative website. During the two days all 1000 participants came together in several plenary sessions. We also mingled over drinks and nibbles with functions held on both Friday and Saturday evenings. I got to meet the CEO of IBM. I also saw Lachlan Murdoch and Bob Carr in the distance – oh and of course Cate and Hugh, along with many others. I even chatted with the singer (I think!) from Spiderbait. He humbly said to me "you probably haven't heard of me". Did I dare admit that this was true?

Each specific stream had several sessions throughout the weekend. Participants in my stream included other workers from small community organisations, CEOs of large NGOs and businesses, politicians and academics. There was an exchange of exciting ideas and interesting experiences in these mixed groups. What I noticed was that many of the participants had a strong interest in long-term and systemic approaches to issues that were discussed. As well as being passionate about our specialised area, we were also keen to put forward strategies that recognised the complexity and interrelated nature of challenges facing our communities.

The co-chairs for my stream were Tanya Plibersek MP and Tim Costello. We also had at least 10 professional facilitators. We had to put forward three big ideas, one of which had to be cost neutral. During the weekend I was surprised to experience a sense that Tanya, Tim and our facilitators really wanted to know what we thought. Also, they were flexible and open to change when things weren't working. On the Saturday night they gave us a written



Image courtesy of the Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

summary of our points. Most people in my stream felt that the ideas in this document had become so generalised that the document was meaningless. Tanya and Tim were completely responsive to our feedback, and the document was revised.

As for the final report, it can be downloaded at www.australia2020.gov.au and you can see the ideas that were put forward. As there was already public discussion about many of these ideas and discussion among other groups it will be hard to know the exact influence of the Summit, if some of these ideas are adopted.

What happens next?

Kevin Rudd has said that by the end of the year he will decide which ideas from the Summit the government will act on. Will my contribution make a difference? It's hard to know. Along with promoting holistic, integrated, capacity building approaches, I was looking for small community organisations to be supported and valued. The need for core funding for small community organisations is documented in the final report and a number of participants put forward the need for reform for funding arrangements in general for the community sector. The latter is documented as a Big Idea. Hopefully neither of these ideas will be lost.

I do believe that overall the 2020 Summit was a good process. Links and networks were also formed that will continue and link in with other networks. The process should not stop with the Summit. The Government's response to what has been put forward, as well as our own utilisation of the final report and the new links and networks will be what ultimately make a difference.

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