

Groups Experiencing Health Inequities

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice involves the four basic principles of participation, equity, access and rights. It refers to the notion of eliminating inequity in health, promoting inclusiveness of diversity and establishing supportive environments for all Australians and applies to the RTA's Aboriginal Action Plan in many ways.

'Participation' involves empowering individuals and communities to be involved in planning and decision making for good health. 'Equity' is the fair allocation of resources and entitlements without discrimination. 'Access' refers to the availability of health services, information and education to everyone. 'Rights' involves equitable opportunities for all individuals to achieve good health.

Eliminating inequities in health involves taking action to achieve fairness by allocating resources and entitlements. Individuals need to have access to the same opportunities to achieve optimal health but extremely disadvantaged people need more resources if their outcomes are to change- 'people need to be treated differently to be treated equally'.

The RTA Aboriginal Action Plan is linked to the RTA Diversity and Equity Plan. The Diversity and Equity Plan "affirms the corporate commitment to 'manage services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, remote and ethnic communities and people with special needs'". This provides people with the 'access' to equitably and rightly achieve good health and will eliminate inequities by treating people 'differently but equally'.

"Targeting campaigns and programs to address road safety issues in Aboriginal communities", "undertaking research to identify licensing issues amongst Aboriginal people" and "funding and evaluating the first pilot NSW Aboriginal Driver Education Program" are some highlights from the Aboriginal Action Plan that are based upon equity and diversity, will involve participation of students to attend and provides access to these students to develop certain skills to enable them to be better drivers.

Promoting inclusiveness of diversity means that health promotion must acknowledge diversity and understand that there are different needs for different groups. The Aboriginal Action Plan does recognize this. Sensitivity of a person's cultural background must also be understood when promoting health, for example, language barriers and cultural beliefs. The aboriginals have many cultural beliefs and this is why it was a good idea to introduce aboriginal staff into the RTA.

"Planning stages in projects which may impact on Aboriginal issues to minimise the impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage" is a right that the Aboriginal culture deserves. It will require participation of Aboriginal staff or communities to help explain the impact the project may have on them so that the RTA can adjust.

"Promoting the Aboriginal Action Plan amongst staff" will promote both aboriginal and non-aboriginal workers of the RTA to work together and participate in this action. This acknowledges diversity and will encourage aboriginal people of the community to come forward and develop their skills.

Establishing supportive environments is important because a social environment in which a person lives or works influences their health and health decisions. A violence and pollution free area with water, nutrition, shelter, clothing, low stress, poverty and isolation and a variety providing area is encouraged.

“Improving partnerships with government and non-government agencies on Aboriginal issues” is an example of participation that will help increase the chance of establishing supportive environments by the increased understanding between Aboriginal customers and Aboriginal staff.

“Creating employment options for Aboriginal people in environmental services, customer service, IT, engineering, communications, road safety, maintenance and human resource” and “improving traineeships through recruitment workshops, information sessions and ongoing support” will both help establish supportive environments by enabling a person to empower themselves into gaining a job. It will make them feel that they are able to work without discrimination. Maybe in the past they have not been granted work because of their colour and this may have caused them to ‘give up’. Why would you keep trying for a job, when you never come out with one?

Social justice involves the four basic principles of participation, equity, access and rights. It refers to the notion of eliminating inequity in health, for example, RTA Diversity and Equity Plan, promoting inclusiveness of diversity, example, planning projects which may impact Aboriginal issues, and establishing supportive environments for all Australians, example, improving partnerships with government and non-government agencies.

Sources: RTA Aboriginal Action Plan 2006-2010

OTTAWA CHARTER

The five action areas of the Ottawa Charter are important to the RTA’s Aboriginal Action Plan, some more than others. These areas include reorienting health services, developing personal skills, creating supportive environments, strengthening community action and building healthy public policy.

Reorienting health services centres on the idea that the focus and delivery of health services has moved from an emphasis on diagnosis, treatment and rehab to a focus on the wellbeing of the whole person. i.e. promotion and prevention.

The RTA Aboriginal Action Plan uses this idea of reorienting health services in aim to promote safer driving amongst Aboriginal people and prevent injuries. For example, “Targeting campaigns and programs to address road safety issues in Aboriginal communities”, “undertaking research to identify licensing issues amongst Aboriginal people” and “funding and evaluating the first pilot NSW Aboriginal Driver Education Program” are some highlights from the Aboriginal Action Plan that generally are promoting for a very important prevention. This action area has been used in an extensive way and has helped develop a good quality action plan.

Developing personal skills through school, workplaces, media and health services helps people develop abilities of communication, problem solving and decision making. These skills help people feel empowered, confident and responsible.

For example, the RTA has “developed and implemented culturally appropriate road safety public education resources.” They have also “implemented strategies to inform Aboriginal novice drivers and supervisors about the Graduated Licensing Scheme and to encourage access to the Parent workshop Helping Learner Drivers Become Safer Drivers”. These help Aboriginal people develop driving skills and become confident, empowered and responsible in this area of education. They will learn to make better decisions and solve problems whilst behind the wheel. This action area is the bases of many Action plans of the RTA at present and is excellent in empowering people especially young drivers to be responsible and confident.

There is not much of a focus on creating supportive environments in the RTA Aboriginal Action Plan. This includes where you live, work and play especially in social and physical environments. Aboriginal and non-aboriginal Australians are encouraged to support each other and work together

but this point is mostly developed in Strengthening Community Action. There is a stronger focus on Reorienting Health Services and Developing Personal Skills.

Strengthening community action assists the community in identifying and addressing health concerns. Larger groups have a greater chance of resolving more issues and gain control over health promotion than individuals or even small groups/partners.

People being involved in surveys are examples of this. The RTA has “undertaken research to identify licensing issues amongst Aboriginal people” by surveying and assessing aboriginal novice drivers. The community must work together to succeed with this. How can staff of the RTA answer questions and improve licensing issues if they don’t open up to the wider community and larger groups to make the results more reliable and solve the problem.

Building healthy public policy includes decisions made at all levels of government by legislation, policies, taxation and organisations. This is not a main focus for the RTA Aboriginal Action Plan 2006-2010 but they have created organisations to help ‘develop personal skills’, ‘reorient health services’ and ‘strengthen community action’ as mentioned before. The RTA is also a government based organisation and is enforcing the decisions made by government, mostly local.

The main action areas of the Ottawa Charter of most importance to the RTA Aboriginal Action Plan 2006-2010 include reorienting health services now focused on the wellbeing of the whole person, developing personal skills through public education mostly on the issue of novice drivers and licensing and strengthening community action involving larger communities to help complete surveys and succeed with results, solving issues. These action areas have been used in extensive ways to help empower aboriginal people in broadening skills, being aware of prevention and working together to prove bigger and better results.

Sources: RTA Aboriginal Action Plan 2006-2010