

# Directions Part 2: Strategy

Social Enterprise National Strategy (SENS) Project  
May, 2021

# Introduction and Theory of Change

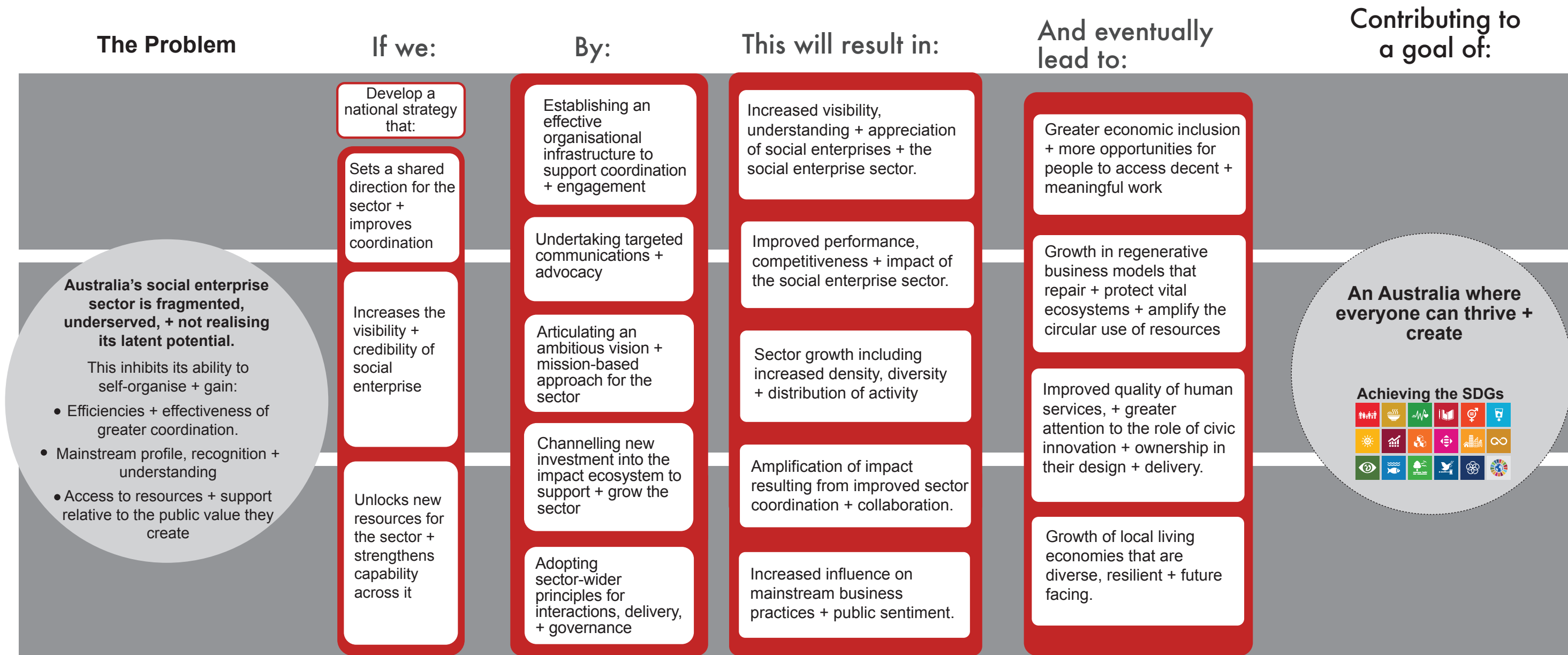
This document is Part Two of the Social Enterprise National Strategy (SENS) Directions Report. It presents a pathway to progress SENS based on the initial round of engagements and sense-making. It also incorporates the implications and recommendations raised in Part One.

The high-level impact map (or Theory of Change) presented here has been developed to provide a starting-point around which the sector coordination initiatives can coalesce. As with all impact maps, it represents a hypothesis that connects the current challenge with a potential course of action, and resulting outputs and outcomes.

Its purpose is to build a shared view of what SENS is seeking to achieve and the steps that could be taken to get there.

As core sector stakeholders work towards an agreement on how to progress SENS, this impact map will become more nuanced and, perhaps, change in emphasis.

Looking ahead, as SENS moves further into action, this map should remain a living document and a point of reference to track and reflect on progress. Ultimately, it will inform the development of an overarching impact framework for SENS.



# Structure + Process

## Structure

In Part One, we explored the work the sector needs to progress to prepare the ground for mounting a case to the Federal Government. Here we outline five interconnected work packages that could form the basis of SENS activity from this point forward. We also want to make two points on how we frame this work going forward.

1. **A sector-led national strategy vs. a national strategy dependent on the Federal Government** - while engaging the Government will be a key component of a national strategy, the sector can, and should, progress a national strategy for its own sake without dependency on it.

Regardless of how future engagement with the Federal Government unfolds, there are significant gains to be realised by improving coordination, connectivity and communication.

2. **‘Pre-strategy’ vs. ‘strategy’** - while the initial work packages are designed to increase the likelihood of securing a strategic partnership with the Federal Government, they also represent ‘strategy’ in themselves and will yield immediate benefits for the sector as a whole. From the implementation of the first work package, the sector should not see itself as preparing for a national strategy, but embarking on one.

The five work packages (WP) are:

- **WP1: Organisational infrastructure** - the means through which to organise, cooperate, coordinate and engage as a sector.
- **WP2: Communication and engagement** - the means through which to elevate the profile and value of social enterprise through communications, education and advocacy.
- **WP3: Vision and a mission-led approach** - the means through which to set a shared direction for the sector and articulate a compelling call to action, that also engages the wider impact ecosystem and the Federal Government.
- **WP4: Principles of practice and conduct** - the means through which to galvanise the diversity of the sector around shared values and identity, complementing the shared direction and strengthening the basis for ongoing cooperation.

- **WP5: Investment case and national strategy** - the means through which to mount an investment case to the Federal Government, securing their long-term partnership, and providing the implementation framework.

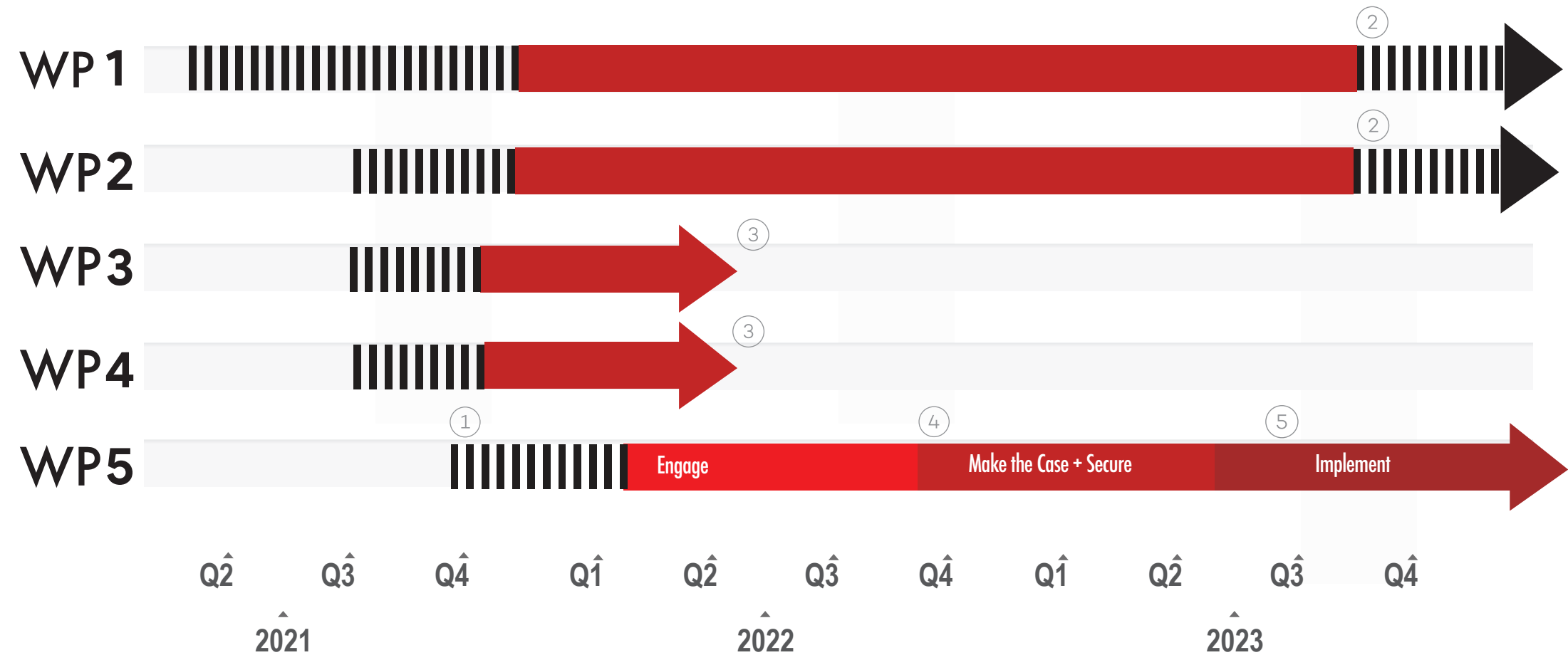
WPs 1-5 are the sector’s strategy; WP 5 is shared with the Government. If SENS is unable to get coherent traction with the Government on WP 5, it has the means to engage across the Federal Government on a more ad-hoc and opportunistic basis whilst retaining its own centre of gravity and an underlying direction and approach that remains coherent with the strategy as a whole.

## Process

These WPs need to be sequenced. It is speculative to determine how they will unfold over time, given the contingencies on resourcing, reaching agreement amongst core sector stakeholders, and engagement with the Federal Government. However, to facilitate discussion and forward movement, we provide a sketch of how the process could look, using the milestone of the Social Enterprise World Forum (SEWF), to be held in Brisbane in September 2022, as the key orientation point for sequencing the elements.

### Diagram Notes

- 1: Outcomes of SIIT recommendations likely to be known.
- 2: These functions will continue independently until partnership on a national strategy with the Federal Government is secured and being implemented.
- 3: Once agreed with core sector stakeholders, the outputs of these WPs will be adopted across the sector and become core components of the other WPs.
- 4: SEWF 2022 - aim to have Federal Government representation with provisional agreement to explore the development of a national strategy and partnership.
- 5: Budget 2023 - aim to have a Federal Government budget allocation for the development of a national strategy and partnership.





# Organisational Infrastructure

In Part One, our strongest recommendation was that the sector's organisational infrastructure - its capacity to organise and coordinate - should be strengthened and formalised before progressing a national strategy.

We believe it is an immediate priority to address coordination risks between core stakeholders, unlock latent efficiency gains, and provide the platform through which to progress the other proposed SENS WPs. Critically, we believe this function will create significant long-term value for the sector regardless of future Federal Government engagement.

In Part One we presented the idea of establishing a new, fit-for-purpose intermediary (akin to SEUK<sup>1</sup>). For the purposes of clarity, in Part Two we step aside from recommending who should lead the critical coordinating work - as it could be designed in a number of ways. Here we focus on clearly outlining what we think the WP objectives and functions should be. For now, we refer to this function as the 'SENS Hub'.

## SENS Hub Objectives

- Create the conditions for a cohesive and collaborative social enterprise sector in Australia.
- Improve communication, coordination and cooperation within the social enterprise sector.
- Strengthen engagement and cooperation between the social enterprise sector and the wider impact ecosystem in Australia.
- Raise the profile and understanding of social enterprise business models.
- Demonstrate how social enterprise is contributing to Australia's economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being.
- Work with the Federal Government to

enable Australia's social enterprise sector to achieve shared goals and to improve the operating environment for social enterprises across Australia.

## SENS Hub Functions

1. Provide coordination support to and facilitate ongoing engagement between core sector groups, networks and bodies. This would include:
2. Providing a secretariat to ASENS. Convening and providing a secretariat to a new Intermediaries Council.
3. Engagement with established bodies that have significant overlap with (or could be considered to be a major constituents of) the social enterprise sector, such as: The Charitable Recycling Network, Disability Enterprises, BCCM, Supply Nation, Arts and Creatives sector etc.
4. Coordinate the development and implementation of WPs 2, 3 and 4.
5. Coordinate and lead engagement with groups, networks and bodies in the wider impact ecosystem, and build a coalition of support for WP 5.
6. Lead the development and prosecution of an investment case that secures the support of the Federal Government.

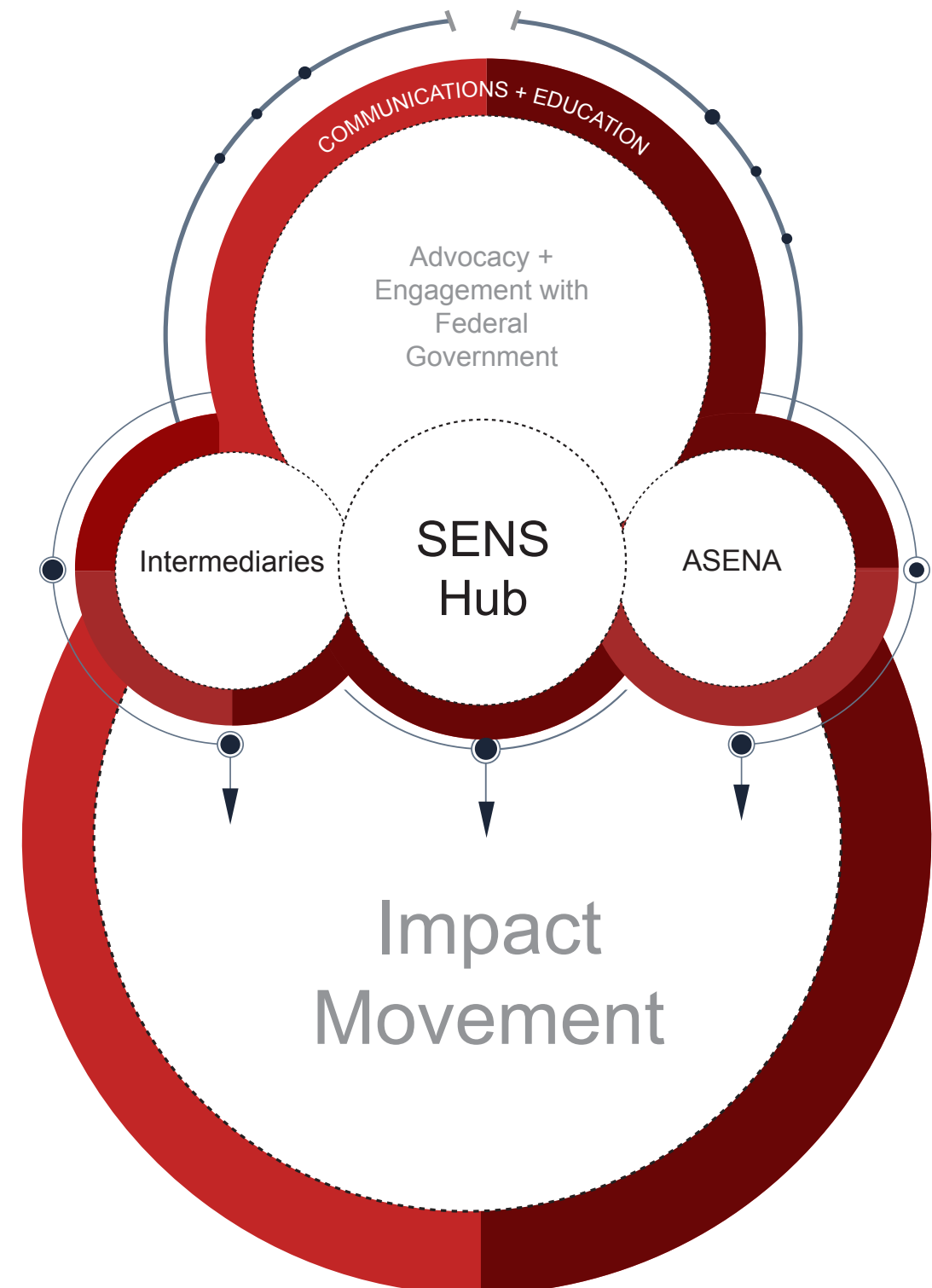
## Establishment

The SENS Hub will need resourcing, and we propose seeking a budget for its establishment. Ideally, the time-horizon for this initiative should be long-term from the outset (10 years); but at a minimum will secure sufficient capacity to cover the milestones previously outlined. We suggest that a partnership with philanthropic organisations engaged with the social enterprise sector should be explored to resource this establishment period (three years minimum), complemented with co-investment from some of the larger and better resourced actors in the sector.

Governance of the SENS Hub (and new potential entity) should represent leadership from across the sector, with at least half of the representation within the governing body being made up of practitioners. These roles should be compensated to strengthen participation and accountability. We propose the existing reference group takes the lead on recruitment for the initial governing group (which could be transitioned to an elected membership in the future).

Immediate next steps would be to further explore the cost structures of comparable bodies, and determine the capacity required for the priority functions.

If WP 5 is successful in securing a partnership with (or investment from) the Federal Government, this function would migrate to become part of the national strategy implementation framework.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/>

# Communications + Engagement

The scope of this WP includes: different levels of engagement, and types of activity and consideration of different audiences. It should be delivered by diverse actors from across the sector.

While this WP should seek to promote and enable a coherence in message and underpinning values, the communications approach should also celebrate diversity in approach and identity.

While there should be coordination around core activities (such as engagement with the Federal Government) and visibility between activities, the emphasis should be on supporting a mass mobilisation of communications and awareness raising, with adaptable resources for issue specific and targeted local level campaigns.

We propose this WP would work at three primary levels.

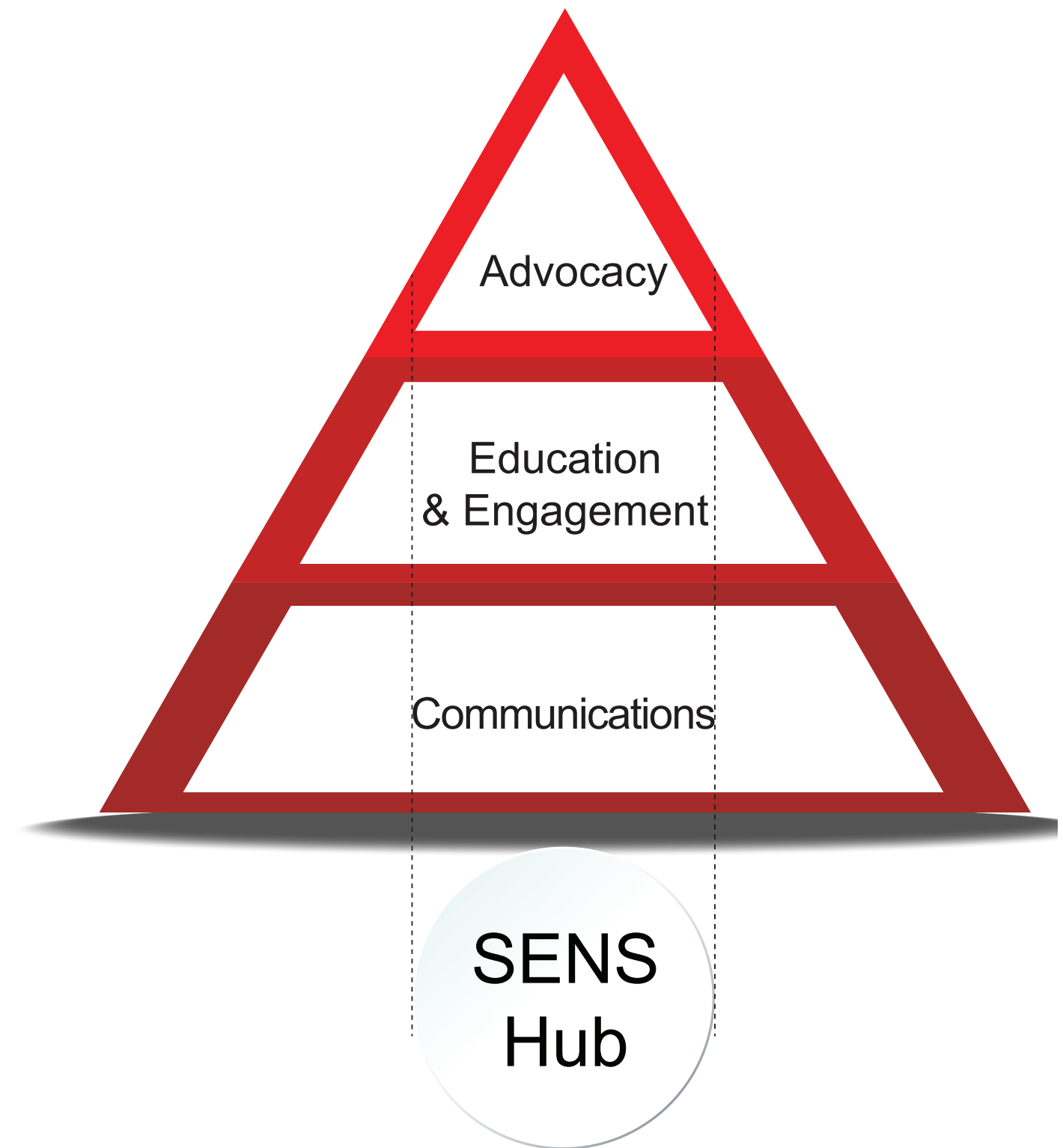
**1. Communication and awareness raising** - a bottom-up and top-down campaign that focuses on telling the stories of what, how and where social enterprises are working across Australia. This program of work would encourage and enable diversity, spontaneity and agency across the sector, with the point of coherence focusing on the consistency of underpinning key identifiers ('we are social enterprise'), values (reflecting principles of practice), and messages (descriptors of practice).

**2. Engagement and education** - following similar design principles, this program of work would be based around activities that result in enhanced engagement and understanding. This could include: site visits to social enterprises for influencers and decision makers; increasing visibility and drawing connections between events and workshops (new and existing) that take place across the country; and amplifying activities in the lead up to SEWF 2022.

**3. Advocacy** - this program of work would lead a targeted and sustained engagement campaign with Federal Government policy makers and politicians. The campaign would build upon the other activities, seek to recruit champions within and external to the Government, and also draw on a coalition of support built through improved engagement within the sector (including the 'lost tribes' of the sector<sup>2</sup>) and with the wider impact ecosystem. This program of work will provide nuanced information and create the pathway into mounting the investment case. If the investment case is not successful in itself, this program would still establish the platform for more ad-hoc and opportunistic engagement.

The development and implementation of this WP would be coordinated by the SENS Hub, but be held across the core sector groups, networks and bodies. We propose working with a specialised communications agency (preferably a social enterprise) that grasps the nature and requirements of SENS, and is capable of helping to choreograph a distributed and authentic campaign approach.

<sup>2</sup> See Part One of this report, Section 4 'Who is this strategy for'.



# Vision + a mission-led approach

In the sense-making exercise we undertook and reflected back on in Part One, we heard about the importance of creating a shared vision for the sector and the desirability for that vision to motivate engagement and underpin cooperation with a broader range of stakeholders. We also heard about the need to elevate the economic value and contribution of social enterprises, and the desirability of locating the sector as an important actor in the Australian economy.

Building on this point, we identified areas where the strengths of social enterprise aligned with both government priorities and the big challenges facing the country. These triangulation points included: employment and decent work; economic inclusion; resilient regional economies; the trajectory towards ethical and purpose-led business; and the delivery of high-quality public services.

Based on the insights we heard, we propose that the sector's vision and direction should be oriented around fostering an economy that improves both the well-being and empowerment of all Australians.

As a vision, we propose:

***An Australia where everyone can thrive and create.***

Supporting this vision, we proposed four missions that establish high-level directions and ambitions for the sector:

1. **An inclusive economy** - where more people are empowered to create and can access decent and meaningful work.

2. **A regenerative economy** - where more business models regenerate and protect vital ecosystems and amplify the circular use of resources.

3. **Local living economies** - where more regional economies are diverse, resilient and future facing.

4. **A caring economy** - where the quality of human services is improved, particularly through greater civic innovation in and ownership over their design and delivery.

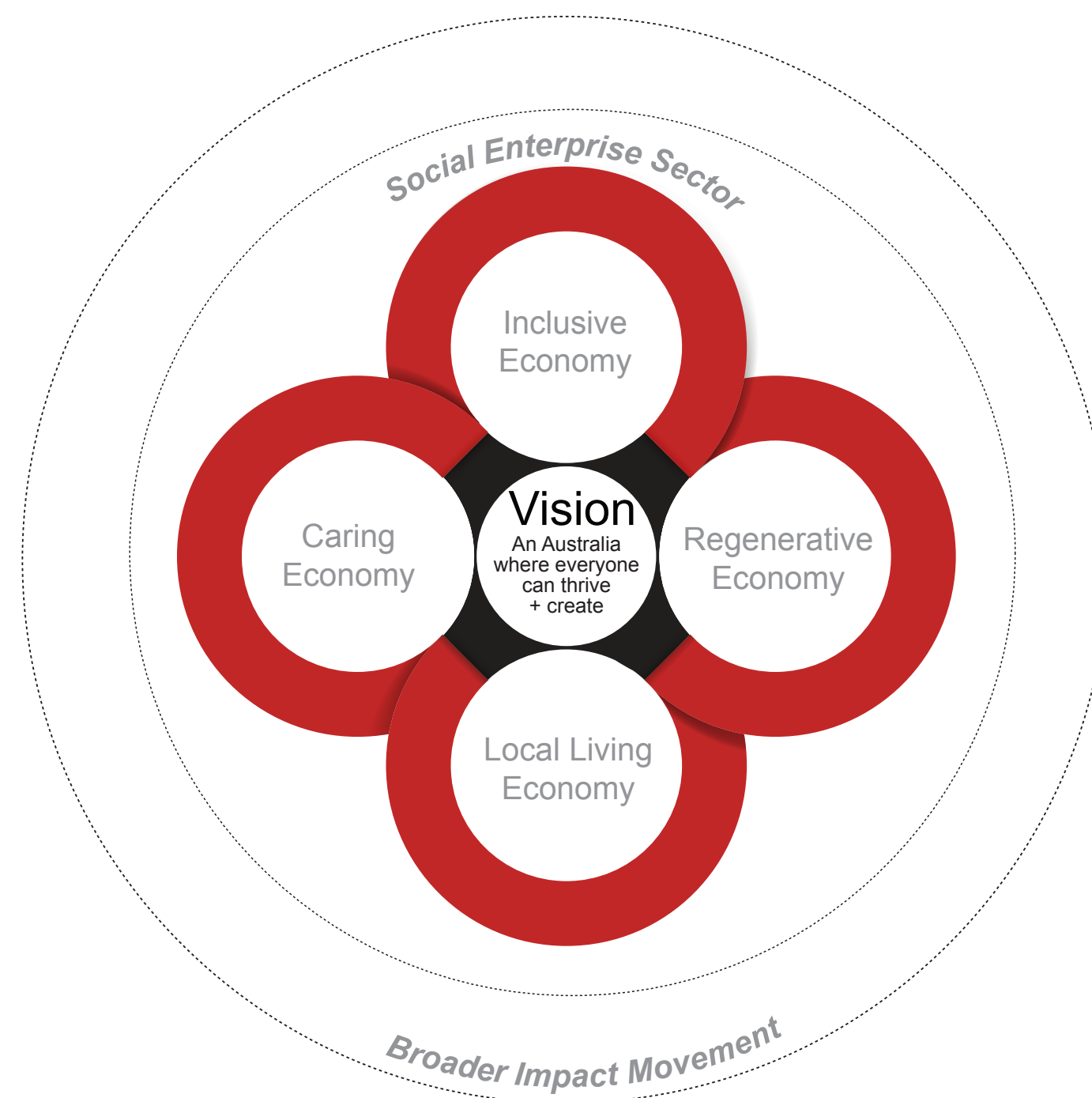
Framing these four key missions in an economic context is a strategic choice, but we believe they speak to and are inclusive of the majority of objectives and outcomes that social enterprises exist to deliver.

We use the term 'missions' in a specific context, that is to say that we are proposing that SENS adopts a 'mission-led strategy' approach.

The mission-led approach provides a 'big picture' map that enables multiple actors to organise and address big and complex challenges. It's purpose is to provide a direction for coherent but decentralised investment and innovation. The concept, promulgated by Mariana Mazzucato<sup>3</sup>, is now being applied to complex challenges around the world. Critically, the mission-led approach is not about planning, it is about setting goals and outcomes we want to innovate towards. Missions are also broad - they help us to see that addressing big challenges requires innovation across systems.

Ambitious missions are achieved through engaging and empowering a range of actors, stakeholders and collaborators. So while this approach outlines a shared direction for the sector, it also offers the means to align intentions and cooperation with the wider impact ecosystem.

Implicit to achieving missions is the need for experimentation - doing things differently and better. This creates demand for a networked approach to innovation, and within networks for a level of hyper-connectivity that enables the rapid exchange of learning, knowledge and resources. Looking ahead, we believe that in addition to providing direction, that a mission-led framework is well suited to the networked approach we suggested in Part One (and see demonstrated in initiatives such as Moving Feast).



3 Mission Economy, M Mazzucato, 2020

# Principles of practice

It is not only a shared vision and direction that creates connectivity, solidarity and purpose within a group or movement. Shared values and principles also galvanise ways of working and help build a common identity amid much diversity.

We propose that the sector articulates and adopts a set of shared principles that reflect a value-based mindset and describe aspirational standards of practice. We believe this will help cement and orientate the development

of the sector now, and also foster alignment, engagement and constructive behaviour over the long-term.

In thinking about the development of these principles we were drawn to an ('original position'<sup>4</sup>) approach which seeks to identify core principles that anyone in the sector can buy-in to if they are motivated to look beyond their own individual and/or organisational position and interests.

We present a draft (or an example) set of principles to be considered, but recognise that an actual set would need to be developed and agreed through a broader (and mostly likely iterative) conversation. We see a set of principles extending to intermediaries and key supporters, as well as practitioners.

The principles of practice could also include the 'principles-based' descriptor of social enterprise, which in Part One of this report we proposed adopting at a sector strategy level (if not at the level of certification, as it has a different purpose and context). This approach could accommodate some of the tensions around prescriptive definitions and the different framings that State networks are currently using.

## Potential principles of practice

As members of the Australian social enterprise sector and movement:

01

We are committed to the self-determination of First Australians.

02

We are committed to strengthening our individual and collective cultural capacity.

03

We reject any form of prejudice, discrimination or abuse of power.

04

We are committed to the principles of mutuality and reciprocity.

05

We welcome new talent and will seek to accommodate new ideas and perspectives.

06

We are committed to treating our staff, colleagues and stakeholders with fairness, respect and dignity.

07

We believe in sharing knowledge, data and resources to foster innovation and maximise impact.

08

We are committed to learning and to improving the quality and impact of our individual and collective work.

09

We are committed to the principles and practices of good governance, while recognising that 'good' is contextual and will take different forms.

10

We respect diversity in perspectives and approaches to creating impact, within this overarching set of principles.

11

We understand social enterprises to:

- Have a clear and primary social, environmental or cultural mission, set out in their governing documents.
- Generate revenue through trading activities.
- See profit as a means, not an end goal.
- Be transparent about how they operate and the impact they make.'

4 A Theory of Justice, John Rawls, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1971



# Investment case + implementation framework

This WP focuses on the means to secure a partnership with and investment from the Federal Government, and also on the development of a high-level framework for how an 'invested' national strategy could be implemented. As outlined in the introduction of this document, we see all of these WPs as part of a national strategy, but clearly securing investment for this WP/aspect would fundamentally change the resourcing environment and coordinating capacity of the sector.

## Structure of the investment case

In Part One, we raised the tension between needing to make the investment case bigger than the sector, whilst also facilitating material investment in it. We propose that the investment case is split into two clear propositions - the offer and the ask.

The 'offer' should be based around the vision and mission-led approach outlined above - being essentially a partnership with the Federal Government to unlock innovation and outcomes in vital areas of the economy. This could enlist a broader coalition of actors and would work towards tangible results in each of the missions. The partnership with the Government would be anchored in achieving those gains over the long-term, rather than the development of the social enterprise sector, per se.

The 'ask' should be based on what the social enterprise sector requires in order to realise its latent potential, and play its role within the partnership (and broader coalition). It would be focused on securing investment for activities that are best done, or can only be done, at a national level of coordination and implementation.

## Implementation framework and approach

As scaffolding for an implementation framework, we are proposing four pillars of activity: infrastructure, innovation, impact and data, and policy.

### Infrastructure

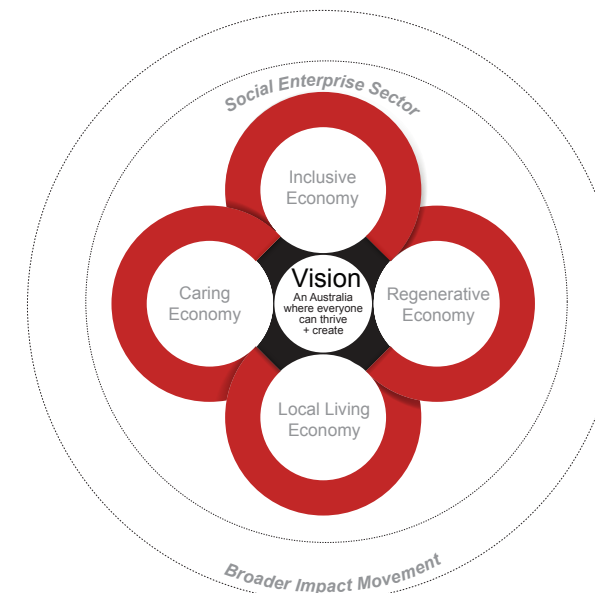
The infrastructure pillar is effectively the continuation of the SENS Hub function, albeit with modifications related to the delivery of the other pillars. Its role within the expanded framework will be integral to the convening, facilitation and development of specific action plans within the strategy, and also operationalising the 'connecting, complementing and compensating' approach outlined below.

### Policy

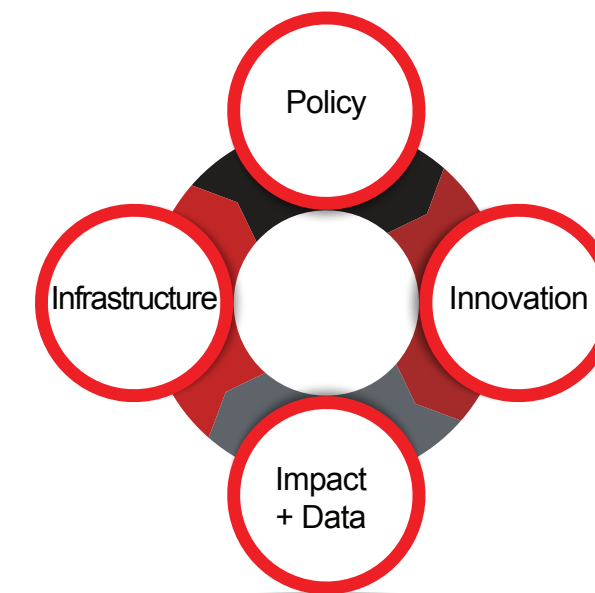
The policy pillar focuses on working with and across the Federal Government (and other tiers of government, where appropriate) to inform the development of policies designed to improve the operating environment for social enterprises, so as to strengthen the public-benefit outcomes they generate. It will draw heavily on the infrastructure pillar, proof points established through the innovation pillar, and data generated through the impact pillar. Through supporting the development of effective policy, including regulation and legislation, it will also provide a framework to guide the maintenance and progression of the overall relationship with the Federal Government.

### Innovation

The innovation pillar focuses on supporting and resourcing research and development (R&D) in ways that are appropriate to the characteristics of social enterprise, and to the ambition of establishing networked approaches to achieving systems-level impact. This



**OFFER**



**ASK**



**COMPLEMENTING  
+  
COMPENSATING  
+  
CONNECTING**



approach will be experimental in itself, but will draw on precedents where networked-based innovation have demonstrated practical results (such as Moving Feast).

This pillar would include - for example: direct funding for R&D projects and initiatives - potentially including resources to 'back-fill' into enterprises so as to free-up their experienced practitioners for ecosystem-level contributions; and also funding for the coordination of thematic innovation networks - which would stretch beyond the sector itself. These networks differ from the core sector infrastructure activities outlined above, but would connect to and build on them.

A core objective of this pillar will be fostering hyperconnectivity between social enterprises working on comparable challenges, opportunities and activities around the country, and enabling learning to be exchanged between them. This could also lead to a more fluid exchange of resources, applied cooperation, and scaling of impact through the interconnected and distributed activity of various stakeholders acting independently. This pillar would also seek to increase engagement with and from universities and other 'anchor' institutions<sup>5</sup> leading to further support and investment for sector-led R&D.

### **Impact and data**

We suggest that for the SENS project ambitions to succeed over the long term, that it will be essential that social enterprises are data literate and are harnessing technology to strengthen and improve their effectiveness and impact. The impact and data pillar therefore focuses on increasing impact literacy across the sector and amongst its stakeholders, and on building an evidence base and data commons for the sector.

Impact literacy refers to the capabilities to design, measure, evaluate and report on impact. It also includes adaptive learning. Increasing impact literacy will include the development, delivery and support of capability and capacity building activities,

and also the provision of social enterprise-appropriate tools, resources and management platforms.

The development of an evidence base and data commons would include knowledge-based assets such as case studies, impact reports, and research<sup>6</sup>, as well as more operational data such as social enterprise registries<sup>7</sup>. Activities could also include undertaking regular sector-wide surveys or census, such as those that have served other jurisdictions well with respect to engagement with governments<sup>8</sup>.

As raised in Part One, the capture, management, ownership, governance, and application of sector-based data presents opportunities but also raises significant risks. Collaborative thinking around how to manage the tensions between these is very much underdeveloped at this time. As a matter of priority, this pillar should include the development of a sector-wide data strategy, with the clear objective of maximising the value of sector-generated data for the sector as a whole. This value-flow should include making data sets of all kinds accessible and usable for enterprise, network, thematic, and/or sector-level strategies.

### **Connecting, complementing and compensating**

The pillars outlined above mostly represent new or additional activities to those already underway within or around the sector. They are also activities that it makes sense to do at the national level of coordination and implementation.

In the framework outlined here we do not specifically address the common elements found in most social enterprise sector strategies, such as: business support and broad-based capability building, social procurement, and social finance. We do outline some of the ideas and tactics offered by interviewees related to these activities in Part Three of this report, which can be drawn

on once progress has been made on the initial activities outlined here in Part Two.

We also note that a national strategy in the Australian context is not starting with a blank canvas - it will be launched into an already busy environment and so needs to be layered with existing strategies that work across different axes, be that: sector wide at a State-level - which tend to focus on these 'nuts and bolts' supports; nationwide for a specific function - as we expect to see around social finance through the Social Innovation Investment Taskforce recommendations; or that have a thematic or sector specific focus - e.g. NDIS, waste management, employment, etc.

We propose that a national strategy needs to avoid duplication, and that this can at least partly be achieved through focusing on activities that:

- **Complement** what already exists - as we have outlined through the four pillars, and bearing in mind that improvements in Federal policies will have significant (albeit as yet unquantifiable) downstream impacts on the operating environment in respect to activity strands like procurement.
- **Increase connectivity** between what already exists - from both top-down (policy) and bottom-up (enterprise/practitioner) perspectives.
- **Compensate** for the lack of support available for specific geographies and sub-sectors.

With this last point in mind, one specific initiative could be the creation of a 'gap-filling' fund within the infrastructure pillar.

This could be designed to play a nationwide 'levelling-up' role by providing resources and/or funding support to where the sector is underserved.

Looking ahead, in addition to this potential fund within the infrastructure pillar, the strategy could also include the establishment of a commissioning entity or platform. This entity could focus specifically on the allocation of resources consistent with an agreed (sector-led) strategy, and under transparent governance arrangements. If designed to function as a wholesale intermediary, it would have the capacity and mechanisms needed to fund the full range of sector-based support and development activities<sup>9</sup>. Building on the foundation established through the initial strategy initiatives, this entity could be funded through some combination of: ongoing Government investment into the sector; allocations from other funding bodies; self-help from across the sector; and potentially some micro-percentage return generated through investment or procurement transactions. This commissioning entity would operate exclusively in the long-term interests of the sector's development, and therefore it would be critical that it be designed (and resourced) so that it does not have any competing interests of its own.

5 See for example: McNeill, J., Boorman, C. & Burkett, I. (2020). Australian Universities as Anchors-in-Place: A Yunus Centre Provocation. Brisbane, Australia: Griffith University

6 As mentioned in Part One, The Centre for Social Impact (CSI) at Swinburne is currently finalising an online evidence portal - the 'Social Entrepreneurship Evidence Space' (or SEE Space); through which it aims to advance policy and practice in social entrepreneurship, and to create a 'digital commons' curated with links to research-based evidence, data sets and active research programs.

7 Social Traders has advised that it will soon be launching its Social Enterprise Finder - an online directory of social enterprises Certified under its program, which will provide public access to a basic level of information on each enterprise. It's worth noting also that some of the State Networks also hold lists that are at various stages of development.

8 See the regular Social Enterprise in Scotland Census initiative, for example: <https://socialenterprisecensus.org.uk/>

9 Although may not include direct financing, depending on the Federal Government's response to the Social Innovation Investment Taskforce's recommendations.

# Building SENS Strategy Readiness

This document has laid out a potential way forward for the SENS project. It provides a pathway, not a plan - not least because the development and progression of SENS is subject to a highly dynamic and contingent context, and in this regard we remind readers of the wider implications and recommendations we surfaced in Part One of this report.

We think that together the five elements, and the inter-relationships between them, offer a credible way forward. The next step will require the convening of a number of core stakeholders to have conversations, ask questions and make decisions about whether and how they may be able to support the initial establishment work. This step is critical as it will ultimately determine the efficacy of the approach presented here.

For next steps, we would be interested to hear feedback and reflections on Parts One and Two from:

- the SENS Reference Group, ASENSA, and from key voices amongst the wider contributors who have been involved in this process.
- the philanthropic funders who have supported this process.

If there is general agreement that the proposed approach should be progressed (with any modifications or improvements agreed by the Reference Group), we suggest the following steps:

- Discussion between sector leaders and engaged philanthropic organisations to explore their interest in contributing to the long-term and strategically focused development of the sector.

- Determination of a realistic budget for implementing the SENS pathway recommendations - including establishing the SENS Hub and progressing the other WPs (or variants on them) outlined above.

- Securing of the resources needed to build the required level of capacity and capability for the SENS project to establish and proceed through until at least the end of 2023.

Other key initiatives that the SENS project will need to work with and around include:

- The Federal Government's response to the Social Innovation Investment Taskforce recommendations - to connect with any activities established, and to update / modify any strategy elements impacted.

- The next Federal Election - to ensure the Communication & Engagement WP is well underway before and active during the period.

- SEWF 2022 - to weave the progression of SENS initiatives into the development and programming of SEWF 2022; and to maximise the opportunities for Federal Government engagement the event will create - including developing targeted positioning statements, and inviting high-level appearances and attendances.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the 48 interviewees who generously contributed insightful commentary and analysis of opportunities and considerations. The list of interviewees is included at Appendix A.

We would also like to thank members of the project Reference Group, the ASENSA Board, The English Family Foundation and the other engaged philanthropic partners who have made this work possible. We were also fortunate to have the involvement of Hon. Wade Noonan, Professor Anne Tiernan, and Trevor Burns in an advocacy strategy workshop convened for the Project Reference group, and we take this opportunity to also thank them for their contribution.

This three-part report developed through the SENS project offers a synthesis of interviews, desk-top research, and the experience of the authors. While extensive, we appreciate that our synthesis is not exhaustive and cannot in the format of a summary report convey the full nuance and insight offered.

Beyond synthesis, we have put an emphasis on interpretation and finding a pragmatic pathway forward. The reports are offered into the sector in good faith, with the assumption (based on what we heard) that parties are interested in working collaboratively to co-develop a way forward that has the interests of the sector at its heart. It is offered as a starting-point for sector-led discussions that will necessarily be at the centre of any next steps.

Suggested citation:

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