

# The Possibility Partnership

The power and potential of “meeting in the middle”

February 2025



# Overview



THE  
POSSIBILITY  
PARTNERSHIP ▶▶

Changing systems to create new possibilities with and for people, families and communities

## Who?

The Possibility Partnership is a group of **Australian NGOs** collaborating with **communities, government, philanthropy** and others to fundamentally reimagine the human services system and contribute to a healthier and more equitable society where everyone has what they need to flourish.

## Why?

**Our human service systems are not working well enough** for too many people around Australia. Our partnership is grounded in an understanding that **we are all complicit in the failures of the system** and have a shared responsibility to take action to change things.

## How?

**A better future is possible.** We must be unrelenting in how we tackle the systemic barriers preventing people accessing what they need to thrive. There is tremendous work happening across the country driven by communities who know this better than anyone. Through targeted learning projects we are working alongside these communities and others to try different things and learn what it takes to create systems built on trust, and that offer flexible and tailored support that works for everyone.

We are working to change ourselves in the process, as we know transforming the sector must start with us. We are committed to radical transparency in sharing what we learn so that we can all move forward together.



# Creating change through collaboration.

The Possibility Partnership is collaborating with communities, government, philanthropy and business, because it will take all of us thinking and acting differently to make lasting change.

Founding and contributing members of TPP include:



**54 Reasons (Save the Children):**  
Matt Gardiner, Simone Gianelli



**Benevolent Society:**  
Lin Hatfield-Dodds,  
Kelly Bruce



Brotherhood of St Laurence  
Working for an Australia free of poverty

**Brotherhood of St Laurence:**  
Travers McLeod,  
Zeah Behrend



**Foyer Foundation:**  
Liz Cameron-Smith



**Life Without Barriers:**  
Claire Robbs (Convenor),  
Servena McIntyre, Tabatha Feher



**Mission Australia:**  
Sharon Callister,  
Marion Bennett



**The Smith Family:**  
Doug Taylor,  
Wendy Field



**Uniting NSW.ACT:**  
Tracey Burton,  
Tammy Pararajasingham



**Wesley Mission:**  
Reverend Stu Cameron

Also supporting the formation of the partnership through their roles in the Driving Group, have been:

- Adam Jay
- Lucia Boxelaar
- Martin Stewart-Weeks
- Morgan Cataldo



# A better future is possible.

Over the last thirty years, a combination of ideology, institutional design, policy decisions and patterns of funding and contracting have made it increasingly difficult to help people and communities find the long-term solutions they need to thrive and live the lives they want. In too many cases, the gap is getting wider. We can start to turn that around...

## From the status quo where:

People with complex and intersecting experiences of disadvantage are left behind

People are defined by the problems they experience and deficit mindsets are the cultural norm

Data collaboration is hard and underutilised

Fragmentation between federal, state and service delivery agencies create a difficult service landscape for individuals to navigate

Services and programs are transactional and short-term and high contract turnover undermines trust and legitimacy of services with community

We take a narrow lens of formal service delivery and programs

## To a future system that:

Delivers better outcomes for everyone, moving beyond engrained, generational disadvantage

Adopts strength-based mindsets and promotes dignity and agency for individuals

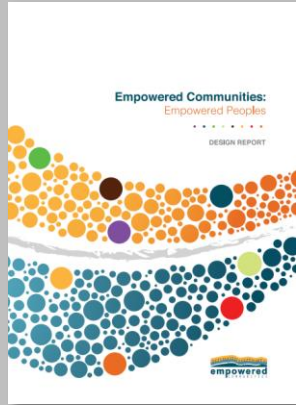
Is grounded in shared evidence and data

Makes it easy for individuals to find, navigate and engage the support they need, regardless of how and where it is funded and run

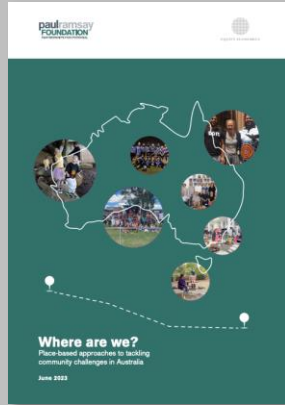
Recognises the centrality of relationships and encourages the growth of social capital through enabling stable, long-term approaches

Integrates the formal and informal services that are the right fit for each individual

# There's plenty of evidence on WHAT needs to change.



Empowered Communities  
Design Report 2015



PRF Where are we? 2023



Strengthening Communities  
Alliance 2023



CPD Resilient People and  
Places report 2024

Multiple studies and reports have put forward a well-evidenced set of recommendations for the kinds of system changes that are required to create a healthier and more equitable social services system.

Key recommendations include, for example

- **Devolving power** from top-down, centralised structures to give more power to local decision making
- Greater cross-sector **collaboration** – neither top-down, nor bottom up
- Aligning **incentives** to desired system reforms (requiring a **shared vision** for future systems)
- New forms of **commissioning**, that encourage collaboration, funding stability, accountability to communities and a focus on outcomes, over activity
- Services that focus on building **capability** and **healthy relationships**, from a strength-based perspective
- Systems and policies that support better **data sharing** between agencies and services

We are also seeing a number of aligned partnerships and collaborations emerging across different parts of the system to create new ways of connecting and collaborating on change: e.g. ChangeFest; Strengthening Communities Alliance; PLACE; Child and Family Hubs Network; IDAC.

We face a **doing**, not a knowing problem.  
TPP is therefore oriented toward **learning through action**.

# The Possibility Partnership Design Principles.

*We believe to build and evolve systems that enable more people to thrive we must:*

## Prioritise people and relationships

Defaulting to trust, and reimagining how our systems interact with people and families, in ways that recognise people as full and complete humans and enable more relational service delivery.



## Share and devolve power

Putting more decision making and autonomy in the hands of people and communities, to support outcomes that people care about.



## Meet in the Middle

Bringing people together from all parts of the system so that the expertise of people and services on the ground and in communities influences and shapes the way 'rules' are made.



Collaborate more than we compete... Sharing resources, information and data in ways that enable better community outcomes. Supporting improved coordination, connection and integration between service providers, government and community.

## Collaborate across boundaries



Looking beyond just the symptoms of the challenges created in complex systems. Moving from crisis response to working on systems and building capabilities that help prevent crises in the first place.

## Address root causes

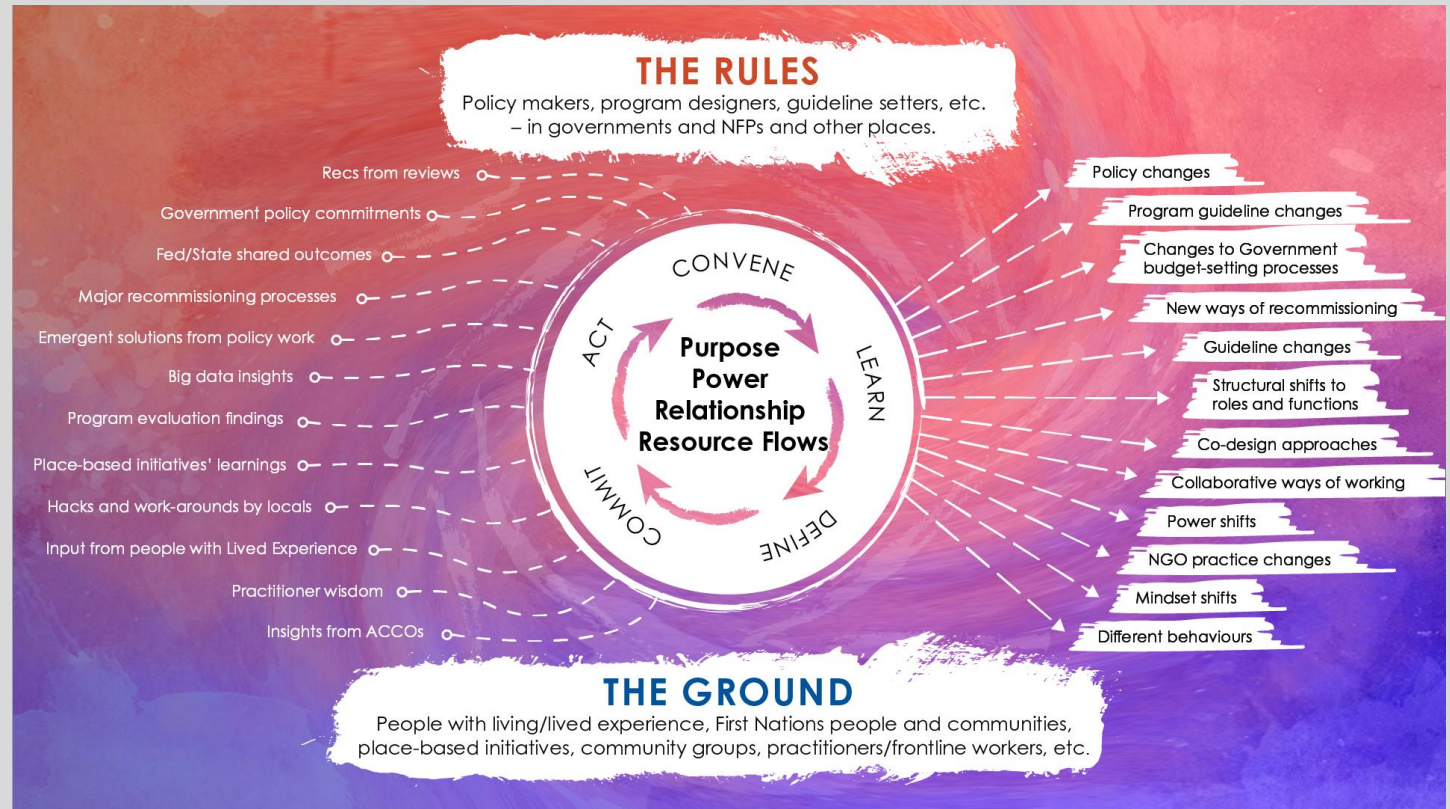




# Why “Meeting in the middle”.

To date the investment in innovation of the human services system has **not led to sustained systemic change** through either significant transformation of existing, mainstream services, or through sufficient scale of alternatives.

- Often, great results “**on the ground**” are not absorbed into business-as-usual design and practices at the point where policies, rules and guidelines are made.
- Similarly, innovations from people working “**in the rules**” are often not translated effectively into day-to-day practice.
- The Possibility Partnership was founded upon the aim to ‘**meet in the middle**’ - convening people from the **Ground**, in the **Rules**, and in between, based on deep listening, co-creating solutions and driving action.
- The work we do together “in the middle” should focus on shifting the **conditions** that lead to current system outcomes
- **Note:** This thinking bears a close resemblance to what the Empowered Communities paper called “**Inside-out collaboration**”



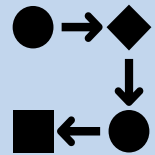
# We're exploring HOW to make change.

## Our strategic approach to moving from theory to action



### Meeting in the middle

The work of The Possibility Partnership is about developing, testing and sharing new ways of bringing people from diverse parts of the system to meet in the middle to have different conversations and cocreate solutions to drive lasting and systemic change.



### Work on ourselves and 'walk the talk'

We acknowledge our own role and responsibility in the current system. We will support and challenge each other to evolve, and walk the talk of TPP's vision, principles and strategy. This includes leading operational change within our organisations, and extends into the space of purpose, culture, capability and mindsets. We will 'work in the open' and share the journey with others.



### Work in partnership with others, to change the rules

TPP will develop partnerships with places, practitioners, innovators, governments and systems changers, to learn more about what works, what doesn't, what barriers exist and why. We aim to connect the wisdom and expertise of those working on the ground with the powers and processes of those setting the rules, to explore and shift systems together.



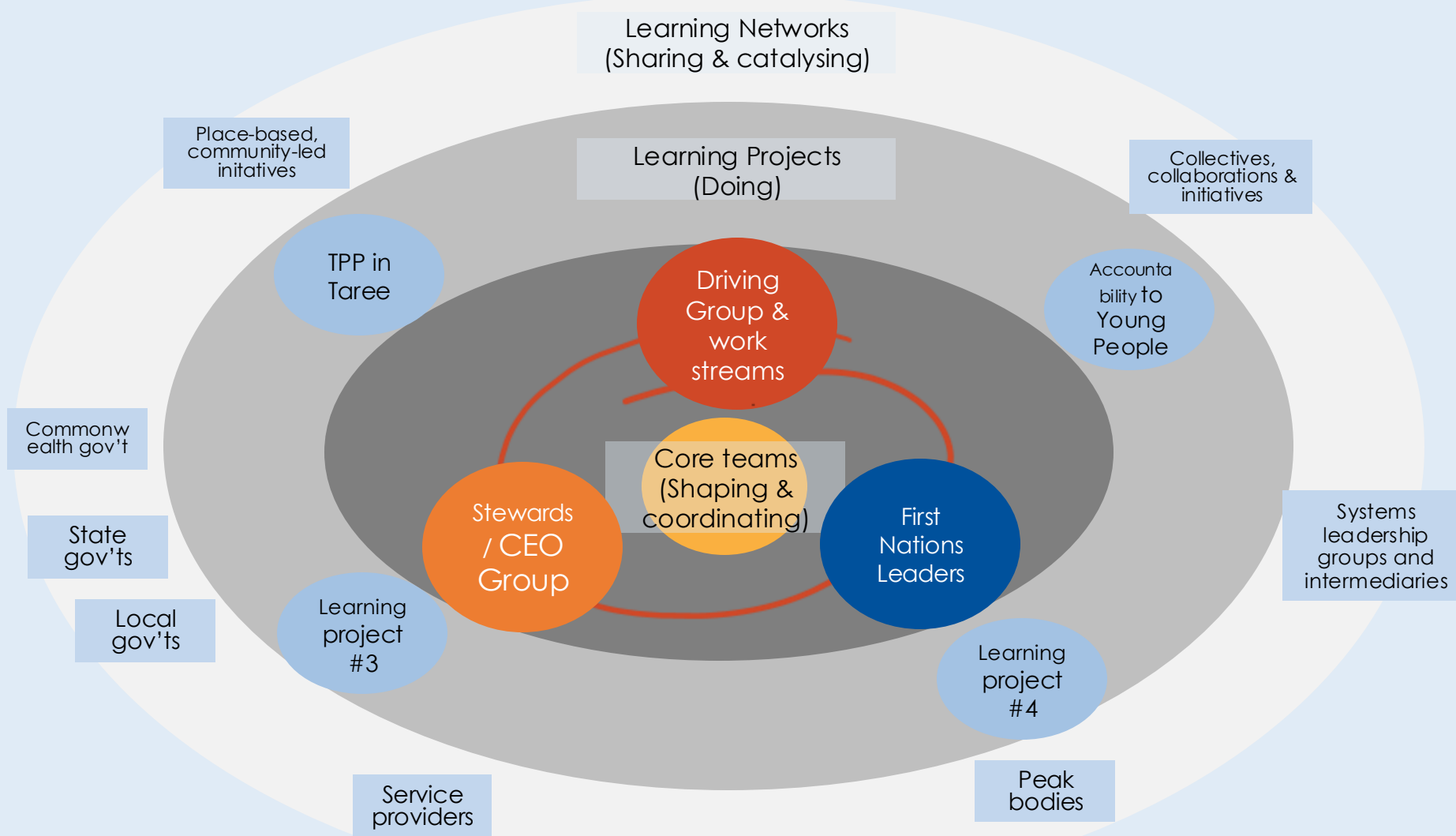
### Learning through doing, and sharing what we learn

We don't have all the answers yet. We are committed to taking action and through this, learning about what it will take to create a systems that works better, for more people. TPP's learning projects will create opportunities to build action-oriented partnerships across the system and contribute to shared knowledge around what works and what doesn't. We are committed to sharing openly and contributing time and resources that enable change.



# How we're organising for action and learning.

Our structures and governance will continue to change and evolve over time in consultation with stakeholders



# We're ready to collaborate and explore what's possible.



Through targeted learning projects we are working alongside communities and others to collect more evidence for what works, try different things and learn what it takes to change complex systems so they are built on trust, and offer flexible and tailored support that works for everyone.

We are connecting with communities, policy makers, philanthropy, nonprofits, service deliverers, because it will take all of us working differently to make change that lasts.

If you would like to know more or explore opportunities to walk alongside us in this work, please get in touch:

Email: [hello@thepossibilitypartnership.org](mailto:hello@thepossibilitypartnership.org)

LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/possibility-partnership](http://www.linkedin.com/company/possibility-partnership)



Thank you!

