



Health Equity – a personal journey

2020 Ian Webster “Health for All” Oration

Greg Stewart, 16 September 2020

Inequality

- A difference between two or more things
- Involves comparison only – can be:
 - Quantitative: e.g. height 180cm vs 160cm
 - Qualitative: e.g. eyes blue or brown

Inequity

- An inequality that is:
 - unfair
 - often preventable
- Involves comparison and a value judgment
- Usually has its origins in the way we organise society:
‘social inequity’
- Often associated with other inequities

Commission on Social Determinants of Health FINAL REPORT



Closing the gap in a generation

Health equity through action on
the social determinants of health



World Health Organization

Commission on Social Determinants of Health



Social Determinants of Health

“the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness. These circumstances are in turn shaped by a wider set of forces: economics, social policies, and politics.”

World Health Organization

Social Determinants of Health and health equity

- Not the same but intimately related
- Social Determinants of Health cause health inequities
- ... and can create equity
- Social Determinants of Health will still exist when there are no health inequities

WHO Commission's recommendations

1. Improve daily living conditions
2. Tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources
3. Measure and understand the problem and assess the impact of action

Improve daily living conditions

1. Equity in early child development and education
2. Healthy places – healthy neighbourhoods, regions and environment
3. Fair employment and decent work
4. Social protection across the life course
5. Universal high quality health care

Tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources

1. Health equity in all policies and programs
2. Fair financing – taxation, programs, international aid
3. Market responsibility – health impact of economic policies; state provision of essential services
4. Gender equity
5. Political empowerment – participative democracy
6. Good global governance – UN & WHO leadership in tackling social determinants

Measure and understand the problem and assess the impact of action

1. Have enough evidence to act now
2. Generate and share new evidence
3. Health equity monitoring systems – local, national, global
4. Training in social determinants of health – for policy makers, health professionals, public, private sector, WHO

A New Commandment

“Love one another as I have loved you”

“Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do to me”

Papal social justice encyclicals

- Rerum Novarum, Leo XIII 1891
- Quadragesimo Anno, Pius XI 1931
- Mater and Magistra, John XXIII 1961
- Centesimus Annus, John Paul II 1991



Health Justice Australia

ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is *the torment of our powerlessness*.

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle*. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.



UNSW
SYDNEY

Professor Anna Yeatman, Whitlam Institute

The Question for Our Times: Institutional Design for a Free Society, February 2017

It is urgent that we reclaim the social democratic project but this time and as an eco-social democracy. We cannot sustain the modern fantasy of the progressive control of nature that was built into the older forms of social democracy. We have to develop the social democratic relational understanding of freedom so that it includes our connection with other species and the biosphere we share with them. We cannot sustain the greedy consumerism that neoliberalism has taught us.

We have no time to lose.

Act Justly,
Love mercy,
Walk humbly with your God

The prophet Micah