

Conference Table Group Discussion

Concept Notes

Session #1: Unifying Dialogue and Consensus Building

A socially cohesive society works towards the wellbeing of all its members. It promotes inclusion, belonging and trust, fosters progress through participation and dialogue, and offers everyone the opportunity to flourish and contribute to a just and prosperous society. Social cohesion extends beyond economics and security—it encapsulates the full human experience. In the first series of roundtables of the *Creating an Inclusive Narrative* project conducted in 2019/20, participants articulated the need for a richer description of social cohesion—one that includes the values, qualities and characteristics around which society can coalesce.

- What progress has been made in recent years in Australia to promote and strengthen social cohesion? What obstacles have been overcome, and what obstacles remain? What insights and lessons have we learned along the way?
- What are the values, norms and approaches that strengthen inclusion, belonging and social harmony?

In an era marked by deep divisions and tribalism, where conversations often descend into contention rather than understanding, it can be increasingly difficult to find common ground. Adversarial methods of debate, partisanship, or protest are not conducive to building unity or consensus, and when we bring together only those who are likeminded to discuss issues that have a bearing on all of society, this may not allow for shared understanding to arise nor generate the collective will to act.

- How can we strengthen our capacity to bring people from different viewpoints and backgrounds together to explore a common set of questions and discuss their lived experiences? What characterizes such dialogue? How can it acknowledge and unlock the capacity of every individual and group to contribute to constructive social change?