



Joined Up Place Based Project – Huon Valley

Service System Network Analysis, 19 July 2018

The Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has delivered the **Joined Up Human Service Project** (Joined Up) which is a significant reform towards a more collaborative and client focussed human service support system.

A place-based initiative in the Huon Valley provided a pilot study of this Joined Up project. Researchers from *Swinburne University of Technology* were engaged to assess the changes in connectivity from 2016 to 2018 between service provider organisations working within and across the Huon Valley, using a research technique called *social network analysis (SNA)*.

Joined Up aims:

- Make human services easier for Tasmanians to access,
- Improve engagement with the service and support system,
- Contribute to better client outcomes for people with multiple complex needs,
- Improve community health and wellbeing.

CSOs

Large & diverse service providers

Small-to-Medium service providers

Huon-based

Issue / Advocacy

Gov't

Human services

Health services

Education

Indigenous services

Who participated?

The organisations in the network study included Human services, Health services, Indigenous services, Education, Large and diverse Community Service Organisations (CSOs), Small-Medium CSOs, Huon CSOs, Issue and Advocacy CSOs (and in 2018, also included Local businesses, Local voluntary groups, Local private health, and Alternative therapy organisations). In 2016, 76 people responded to the network survey on behalf of 57 organisations. In 2018, 91 people responded for 58 organisations.

What was asked?

The two social network surveys asked about a range of interorganisational relationships and perceptions, and participation in various forums and activities. This was combined with data about attitudes and beliefs about the functioning of the community services sector in the Huon Valley.

Operational

- Referral
- Coordination of services

Experiential

- Collaboration
- Trust
- Difficulties

Reputation

- Effective?
- community's best interest?

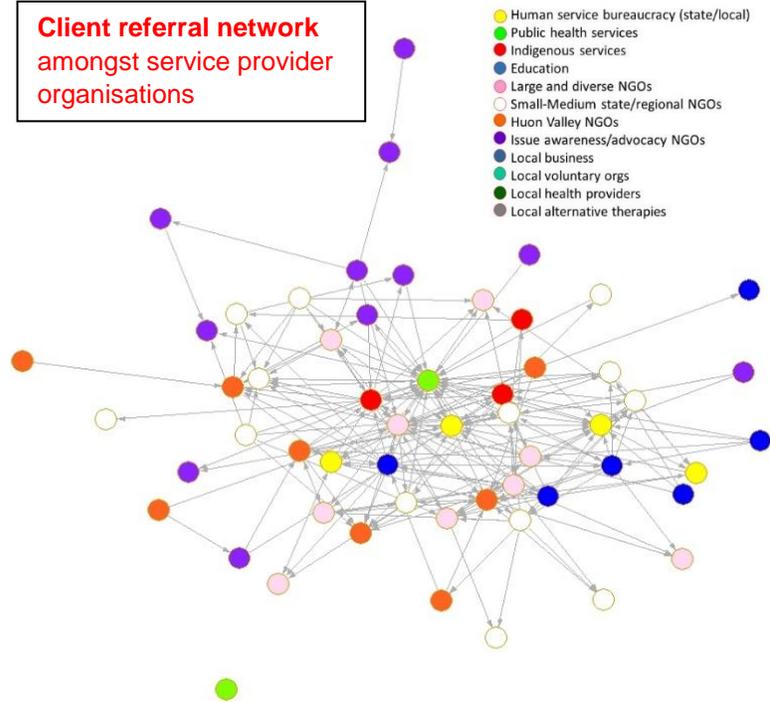
What were the findings?

Collaboration, referral, and coordination of services networks were *highly connected* at both 2016 and 2018. Huon Valley service providers were, and remain, a very connected network of service providers. Network membership in the *Huon Valley Service Provider Network* (a central networking forum) grew significantly over time, with a threefold increase in numbers of people invited to participate in the survey. Interview data and other indicators suggest that this growth created tangible benefits for organisations over time.

Quantitative evidence gives an idea of the types of interactions and relationships that strengthen and protect collaboration relationships.

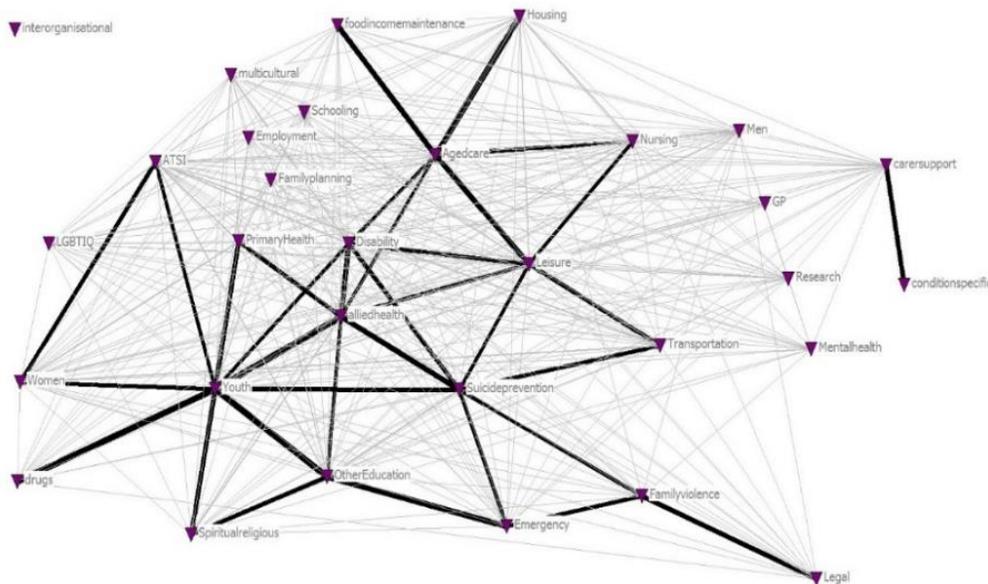
1. **Be on the same page.** Two organisations *mutually* regarding one another as easy and reliable collaboration partners predicted further collaboration in 2018. One-sided recognitions of collaboration *did not* predict continued collaboration later on.
2. **Reputation matters.** Organisations seen as *highly effective* at providing services in 2016 *attract other organisations* to collaborate with them in 2018.
3. **Competition opens doors.** Seeing another organisation as a *competitor* (in 2016) actually led to later *collaboration*.
4. **Collaboration was persistent.** Having a difficult time collaborating with another organisation (for whatever reason) did not lead to an end in collaboration (in 2018).

Client referral network amongst service provider organisations



The **referral network** (above) shows a cohesive client referral system of service providers. The dots represent service provider organisations, and the arrows represent client referrals going from one organisation to another organisation (in the direction of the arrow).

However, overall, this study found **limited quantitative evidence** of service provider network *growth* as a whole, and in some circumstances, found evidence of a drop in network activity (likely due to an estimated 20% participation rate, which is low and limits the results and conclusions we can make from them).



The **services co-provision network** (left, see p. 24 of report) shows organisations working together on an issue and demonstrates that there is very strong connectivity between service provider organisations within the Huon Valley. Here, we see that there are no separated services. The thick black lines represent the amount of organisations covering both service types, and thus services which are co-provided to a greater degree. This is fairly consistent across 2016 and 2018.

For **future projects** like *Joined Up* that look to build service provider networks, it is **critical to have formal role (i.e., a Regional Coordinator) supporting the informal network through raising awareness of other organisations and their offerings**. We would also suggest that *centralising the collection of network data and embedding it within grant application and award processes* will mean that less will be less reliance on surveys for network data. The connectivity of the service provider network may also be usefully tracked via board memberships, or memberships in various forums and consortia. Overall, social network analysis (SNA) has strong potential to provide a quantitative evidence base of collaboration and networks among service provider organisations, and with more representative data may provide ways to measure network effectiveness.