Journal

Editors' Introduction

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This Special Issue of *The Drawing Board* is an outcome of a series of workshops called 'Meanings, Myths and Metaphors of Social Policy' organised by the Centre for Applied Social Research in the School of Social Science and Planning at RMIT University. The workshops, held in late 2002, aimed to reinvigorate Australian social policy debate by interrogating now influential policy metaphors such as social capital and social inclusion.

The workshops provided a forum for discussion and debate about both theory and practical policy concerns, bringing together researchers and policy practitioners with a range of perspectives. Representatives from the public sector, academia, and non-government community services organisations presented papers that probed taken-for-granted meanings and explored the relationship between the language of policy and its practical effects. We worked with several participants to develop the selection of workshop contributions we present here.

The papers examine the origins and evolution of popular concepts, and their strategic significance in shaping Australian

social policies and politics. Ben Spies-Butcher's contribution, 'Social Capital and Economics: Why Social Capital Does Not Mean the End of Ideology', examines how social capital was popularised in Australia, noting the influence of orthodox economic theory and Third Way politics. This influence helps us understand how social capital is linked to current enthusiasm to re-engage 'civil society' in meeting future social and cultural needs. Toby Fattore, Nick Turnbull, and Shaun Wilson also explore the concept of social capital in their paper, ''More Community!' Does the Social Capital Hypothesis Offer Hope for Untrusting Societies?'. Using survey data from the Middle Australia Project, they show that social policies aiming to restore public trust by

enhancing community
relationships may not