DISRUPTING DISADVANTAGE

Stronger Places, Stronger People

EARLY EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE

SPSP Backbone Teams
with support from Collaboration for Impact

BURNiE WORKS

Gladstone Region Together grt

LOGAN together

HANDS UP MALLEE

Far West Community Partnerships

MARANGUKA COMMUNITY HUB

Collaboration for Impact

DISRUPTING DISADVANTAGE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early evidence of the impact of a community-led approach from the Stronger Places, Stronger People Initiative demonstrates that children and families in these communities have improved wellbeing. It shows what government and community partnership looks like in practice. And it highlights that Backbone Teams provide the essential infrastructure and ways of working that is contributing to Closing the Gap priority reforms and targets and broader Australian Government priority policy initiatives (Annex 1).

The investment to date of community members' time and energy, service providers' willingness to listen and adapt and government's financial and partnership support provides a unique platform for sustained improvement in children's and families' lives. We are confident that the pace of progress will accelerate as the initiative matures. Communities are committed to strengthening the evidence base for this way of working so we can apply the lessons and deepen our impact.

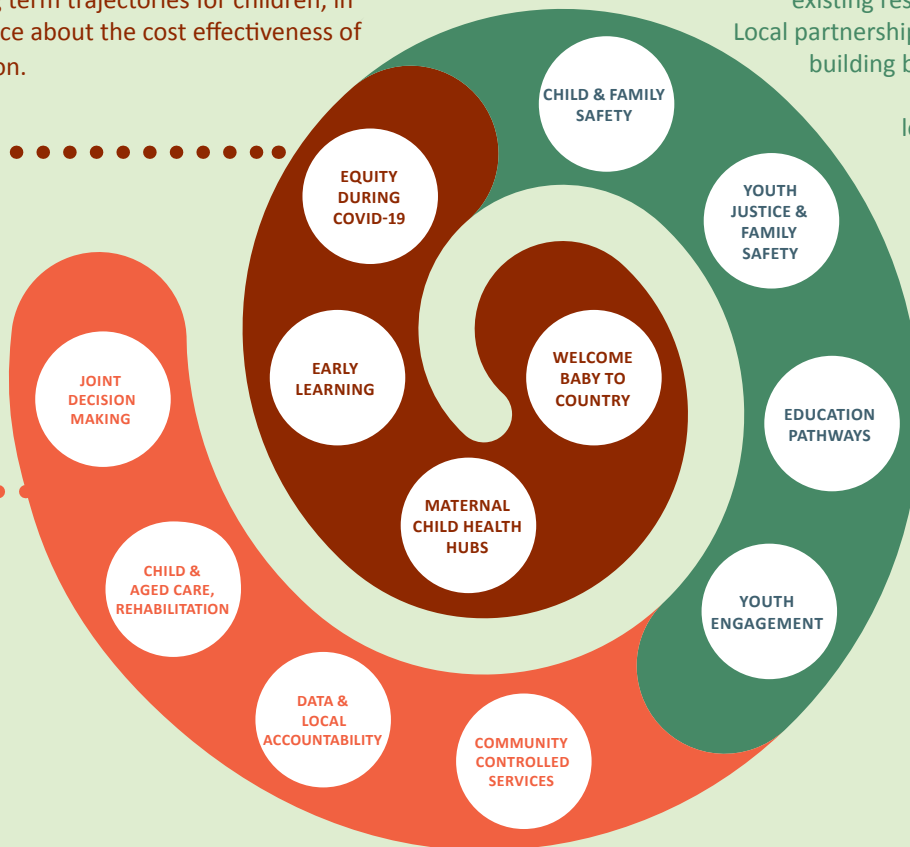## COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE IS DISRUPTING DISADVANTAGE

By taking a whole-of-community approach to disrupting disadvantage, children and families are connected, valued and have improved wellbeing. Investments in early learning and family health are shifting the long term trajectories for children, in line with evidence about the cost effectiveness of early intervention.

PARTNERSHIPS ARE KEY TO COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE

Communities, governments and service providers have changed their behaviour; contributing to children, disengaged youth and families thriving. Backbone Teams bring people together to amplify diverse voices and use existing resources differently. Local partnerships are creating the building blocks for regional, state and national level collaboration.

- CHILD & FAMILY SAFETY
- EQUITY DURING COVID-19
- YOUTH JUSTICE & FAMILY SAFETY
- JOINT DECISION MAKING
- EARLY LEARNING
- WELCOME BABY TO COUNTRY
- EDUCATION PATHWAYS
- MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH HUBS
- CHILD & AGED CARE, REHABILITATION
- YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
- DATA & LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY
- COMMUNITY CONTROLLED SERVICES

BACKBONE TEAMS ARE ESSENTIAL TO COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE

BROADER GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Communities are securing new infrastructure, more appropriate services and using evidence to inform planning decisions. SPSP Backbone Teams help turn what the community knows they need into reality. Without the local governance infrastructure and ways of working that they provide, these changes wouldn't happen.

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CONTENTS

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Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drug
APGAR	Appearance, Pulse, Grimace, Activity, and Respiration
APS	Australian Public Service
BBT	Backbone Team
BW	Burnie Works
CB	Connected Beginnings
CSLG	Cross Sector Leadership Group
CYWB	Child Youth Wellbeing
CERR	Community Emergency Relief and Response
CFI	Collaboration For Impact
DCJ	Department of Community & Justice
DSS	Department of Social Services
JDM	Joint Decision Making
EC	Empowered Communities
EPDN	Economic Development Practitioners Network
FN	First Nations
FRS	Uniting's Family Referral Service Program
FWCP	Far West Community Partnership
FWACLG	Far West Aboriginal Community Leaders Group
GMT	Generations Music Together
GRT	Gladstone Region engaging in action Together
HUM	Hands Up Mallee
JDM	Joint Decision Making
LGA	Local Government Area
LiL	Launch into Learning
LCC	Logan City Council
LNG	Liquified Natural Gas
LT	Logan Together
MRCC	Mildura Rural City Council
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NLG	National Leadership Group
QNMU	Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union
SSSS	Safe Smart Strong Strategy
SMECC	Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council
SPSP	Stronger Places, Stronger People
TCE	Tasmanian Certificate of Education
U-MEL	Understanding Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
UTAS	University of Tasmania

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DISRUPTING DISADVANTAGE EARLY EVIDENCE OF IMPACT REPORT

PURPOSE

This report captures early evidence of the impact of a community-led approach to disrupting disadvantage. The examples are from communities involved in the Stronger Places, Stronger People (SPSP) initiative and provide clear signals that the objective of improved wellbeing for children and their families in these communities is being met.

In August 2022, the SPSP National Leadership Group (NLG) and Backbone Team Leads identified three trends in the reporting and narrative of communities at this early stage in the initiative. These are:

- A community-led approach is disrupting disadvantage
- Governments and service providers working differently in partnership with communities are key to community-led change and
- Backbone Teams are essential to community-led change.

These early examples contribute to broader Australian Government priority policy initiatives such as Closing the Gap, Justice Reinvestment, Early Years, Family Violence and Indigenous Voice (see Annex 1). They also show what the partnership that the Albanese Government is calling for in its APS reform agenda,[1] can look like in practice.

Backbone Teams therefore agreed to quickly capture examples of early impact to support continued engagement with governments and other partners on the successes to date and potential to further leverage this initiative.

BACKGROUND

Stronger Places, Stronger People is an Australian Government initiative supporting place-based collective impact methodology in partnership with 10 Australian communities and State and Territory governments. The goal of SPSP is to disrupt disadvantage in 10 demonstration communities over time; it was designed as a 10-year investment. The objective is to demonstrate improved wellbeing for children and their families living in these communities, achieved through community-led change that includes policy, funding, and systems reform. The Department of Social Services (DSS) is providing $35m over 5 years (2019 – 2024) in the first phase of the initiative.

Key to the initiative is the change made possible through funding a local Backbone Team. Backbone Teams are a key component of the Collective Impact[2] methodology and the importance of their role is reflected in global evidence of best practice. In SPSP, Backbones play a variety of roles, including bringing partners together in an inclusive whole of community approach, generating a shared vision and strategy, dedicating resources to data gathering, analysis, amplifying community voices and supporting advocacy efforts for new ways of addressing longstanding challenges facing their communities. The collective experience of State and Commonwealth government partners in SPSP is that they are also key to supporting a new way of working.

Unique to SPSP is the partnership between the Commonwealth, States and Territories, local governments, service providers, and community members. Partners are sharing decision-making and accountability, sharing data, revising procurement and contractual requirements and aligning resources to meet community needs.

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1   https://ministers.pmc.gov.au/gallagher/2022/albanese-governments-aps-reform-agenda
2   https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact
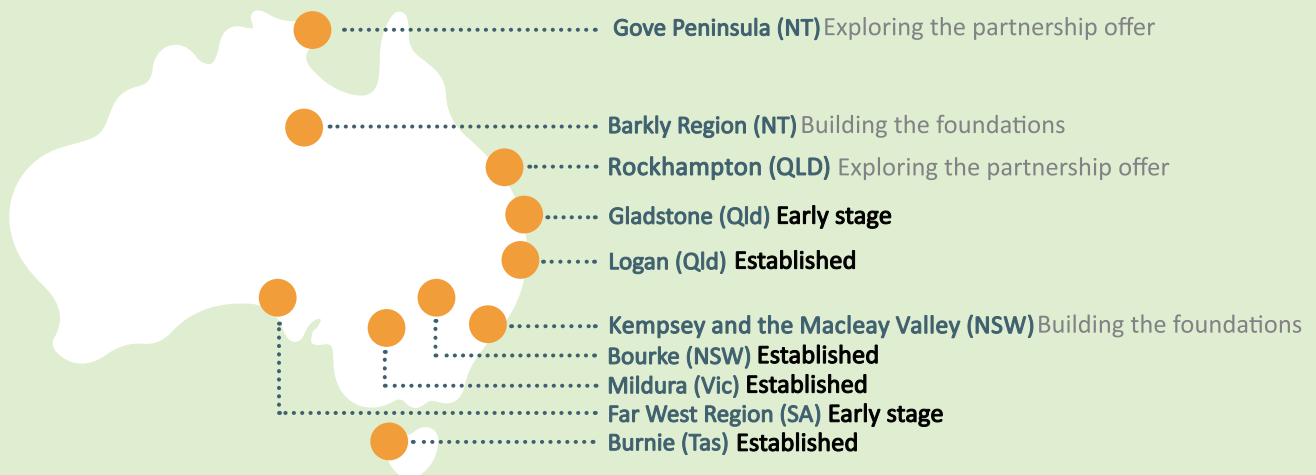
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METHODOLOGY

The evidence included in this report was identified jointly by the SPSP Backbone Teams with support from Collaboration for Impact (CFI), an SPSP implementation and learning partner.[3]

The SPSP communities are unique in their histories, priorities and approach to disrupting disadvantage. They are also at different stages in the journey of working collectively, as summarised in the map below. Evidence in this report is from communities in the established and early stages.

International and national experience shows that it takes decades to achieve sustained systemic and population level changes. Tension exists over the time required to shift behaviours and practices at a systemic and population level, and the need and desire for policy makers and funders to capture early examples of change. Recent years have seen a shift from measuring attribution to acknowledging that initiatives are one contributor amongst broader influences in systemic and population level changes.[4] There is also a move towards recognising and valuing data and evidence in a range of forms and types, so as to capture the complexity of systems change and the power dynamics inherent in it.[5]

Communities and government are working to enhance their access to information and data held by governments, service providers and others that would support more informed decision-making and monitoring of change. They also recognise the need to strengthen the diversity of ways in which they capture, learn from and celebrate stories of impact and track change over time. Including for some communities and where feasible to measure the economic impact of initiatives. Efforts are underway across the communities to undertake Social Return on Investments, evaluations of particular activities, build local capacity to capture change, and continue strengthening the learning and evidence base for this way of working and its impact. Given these tensions, the SPSP communities have evidenced the examples of change included in this report through a combination of data types including:

- Quantitative statistics and reference to established policy and research sources – local, national and international
- Qualitative inputs from families directly impacted by the initiatives
- Qualitative inputs from partners involved in the initiatives.

Gove Peninsula (NT) Exploring the partnership offer

Barkly Region (NT) Building the foundations

Rockhampton (QLD) Exploring the partnership offer

Gladstone (Qld) Early stage

Logan (Qld) Established

Kempsey and the Macleay Valley (NSW) Building the foundations

Bourke (NSW) Established

Mildura (Vic) Established

Far West Region (SA) Early stage

Burnie (Tas) Established

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3 The three trends outlined above align with the SPSP Theory of Change and Understanding Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (U-MEL framework.

4 Gates, Walton, & Vidueira, 2021. Systems and Complexity-Informed Evaluation: Insights from Practice.

5 Storytelling for systems change: insights from the field. Centre for Public Impact, Dusseldorp Forum, Hands Up Mallee.

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The SPSP Backbone Teams and NLG acknowledge the voluntary contribution of community members in sharing their time and knowledge in the development of the evidence and case studies included in this report. The knowledge and stories of impact included here belong to the respective community members and partners.

THE EARLY EVIDENCE

1. A community-led approach is disrupting disadvantage

We know that improving outcomes for children and families is a long journey. The goal of SPSP is to disrupt disadvantage in 10 demonstration communities by 2029. After four years, we already see that families feel valued and are positively contributing to children's improved education, health, social, economic and cultural wellbeing. Community-led initiatives are enabling families to live the kind of lives they value and children to thrive.

SPSP ways of working that enable community-led change are evolving through collective learning. As these behaviours mature we can see the compounding effect this is having on results. Both in how the newer communities can build on the lessons of others and quickly shift behaviours and demonstrate results (Gladstone Region engaging in action Together (GRT) and Far West Community Partnerships (FWCP)). As well as how early successes in the more established communities can be a catalyst for deeper and broader changes across their communities and beyond.

- Burnie Works (BW) is providing the infrastructure and way of working for employment, education and training efforts across NorthWest Tasmania[6]
- Logan Together (LT) has worked with community to define an Early Childhood Development system, which will roll-out to focus communities across Logan
- Hands Up Mallee (HUM)'s innovation in providing equity in vaccine outreach services won a Victorian Public Healthcare Award 2022
- Maranguka's cross sector leadership and community-wide engagement on justice has contributed to the expansion of the Justice Reinvestment model.

The investment to date of community members' time and energy, service providers' willingness to listen and adapt and government's financial and partnership support provides a platform for sustained improvement in children's and families' lives. We are confident that momentum will continue to build and the pace of progress will accelerate; our 2029 goal is within reach.

Over $48 billion is spent each year by the Commonwealth on social programs aimed at lifting individuals and families towards self-sufficiency, good health, safety and wellbeing.[7] States and Territories spend an additional $10 – 15 billion per year on social services. The Commonwealth's SPSP investment represents less than 0.015% of this annual spend.[8]

The cost of disadvantage is multi-dimensional and attempts to quantify it have included measuring productivity loss, economic cost to family, 'regrettables' (spending by governments on health and justice), the social cost for an individual or family, and to broader society of crime or loss of civic trust. Measuring the cost of disadvantage is complex, has significant limitations and ultimately is of limited value. However, the extent to which a policy or initiative contributes to reducing one or more of these costs, relative to the cost of the policy or initiative may be useful.[9] Attempting to quantify the extent to which SPSP is contributing to one

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6   West North West Working, funded by Tasmanian Government and covering one third of Tasmania.
7   AAIHW Welfare expenditure snapshot, 11 September 2019 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/welfare-expenditure. Commonwealth welfare services encompass services and programs to support and assist people and the community. Examples are family support services, youth programs, childcare services, services for older people, and services for people with disability. Note this figure excludes welfare payments.
8   $35m/ 5years is $7m, as percentage of $48billion.
9   https://www.pc.gov.au/research/supporting/deep-persistent-disadvantage/deep-persistent-disadvantage.pdf

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or more of these measures is beyond the scope of this report.

Early indications from the evidence in this report point towards shifts in reduced social costs to an individual, family or community and regrettable spending. For example, a cost analysis of the Community Maternal and Child Health Hubs in Logan (Case Study 2) shows a saving of more than $0.5m due to a reduction in birth interventions (specifically, reduced days in hospital, increased number of natural births and reduced staffing costs).[10] This saving is just one of the many benefits of this one reform in just one of the 10 communities and represents 1.5% of the total SPSP commonwealth expenditure.[11]

There is strong and growing evidence that prevention and early intervention initiatives are more effective and cheaper policy responses than later interventions.[12] Early childhood provides a clear window of opportunity to influence the trajectory of a child's life across all factors of wellbeing. Children and young people are part of a family and community and thus their futures are heavily influenced by systemic changes that enable families and communities to thrive. SPSP communities develop localised strategies to tackle disadvantage, grounded in human development with a focus on the early years, where evidence shows the greatest impact in creating strong foundations for lifelong wellbeing.

Early evidence from SPSP communities shows that investment in social connections, early learning, and family health are shifting the long term trajectories for children. For example, Maranguka's Welcome Baby to Country (Case Study 1) ceremonies have given over 100 babies (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) the best start to life by connecting them and their parents to the land and community, culture and family. Ensuring access to health and other services while supporting positive pathways, healing and a sense of self.

"Our children are our future. Both mothers and fathers have a huge responsibility to give their children the best possible opportunities in life to allow them to flourish."

WELCOME BABY TO COUNTRY CEREMONY PARTICIPANT

Burnie Works' support connecting with families disengaged from early learning services (Case Study 3) was grounded in evidence from the Tasmanian Department of Education. Their data showed that the learning outcomes for those children attending early learning programs were demonstrably stronger across all parental educational levels and all assessments.

Hands Up Mallee's work to bring partners together for emergency relief and to reach the most vulnerable during Covid-19 (Case Study 4) recently won a 2022 Victorian Public Healthcare Award. One of its successes includes 1,294 vaccinations provided to people experiencing significant barriers to receiving a vaccination, including undocumented migrants, families without transport and residents in public housing. Aboriginal partners provided guidance to the vaccination outreach process, contributing to the location choice and high attendance rates due to people feeling safe.

SPSP communities are contributing to Closing the Gap priority reforms and targets. A community-led approach enables First Nations peoples to determine, drive and own the way local needs are heard and met. The case studies included in this report contribute to at least 10 of the 17 Closing the Gap targets and all of the Priority Reforms, in particular, Priority Reform 1: Formal partnerships and shared decision-making and Priority Reform 2: Building the community-controlled sector.

For example, the rate of First Nations still births at the Logan Maternity Hubs is now 0.3% compared with rates in other parts of Queensland of between 1% and 5%. The Hubs contribute to Closing the Gap Target 2: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91

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10 Logan Community Maternity and Child Health Hubs Cost Analysis.

11 A rough indication is that it would take 10 such reforms in each community to result in savings that equate to the full cost of the Commonwealth investment.

12 https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/274/filename/Better-systems-better-chances.pdf https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/crm/crm54, https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/42_Report_QCOSS_ReviewPaper.pdf

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per cent. Further, based on Hub outcomes to date, it is believed that an extension and increased investment in Maternity Hubs in Logan would result in reduced neo-natal intensive care admissions, reduced post-natal re-admissions and reduced intergenerational disadvantage and trauma.

2. Governments and service providers working differently in partnership with communities are key to community-led change

Communities, governments, business and service providers have changed their behaviours. This is transforming the trajectory of individuals and families lives and enabling them to thrive.

We are seeing early examples of changes in how policy is developed, funding is allocated and measured, service provision contracts are designed and tendered and how individuals within governments, service providers and communities work together and share decision-making. The impact of these changes in behaviour extend beyond a single community, to contribute to and influence policy and practice at regional, state and national levels. As noted above, successful initiatives in SPSP communities across health, justice and economic sectors have been recognised and scaled up or are informing development of new state-wide approaches. The common thread to these successes is the changed behaviour called for to enable working in partnership.

Outcomes for individuals and families are being improved by Backbone Teams bringing people together to find innovative solutions to old problems.

In most cases the community, service providers and government partners know what the problems facing families in their communities are; yet they are complex and require multiple, connected responses. Solutions are not clearly in any one organisation's mandate or job description. What has been missing is a body whose role it is to consider the system as a whole and focus on how to bring people together, consistently, until community voice and needs are reflected in solutions.

Catalysing behavioural shifts and new ways of thinking and being requires a consistent driver. The evidence collated here demonstrates that Backbone Teams play this essential role, contributing to tangible systemic changes which in turn lead to better outcomes for children and families across Australia.

For example, a Daily Check-In between Maranguka, police, service providers, departments of education and community services has contributed to major reductions in youth offending and family violence (50% reduction in juveniles charged from January 2017 to June 2022).[13] Alongside these reduced rates are increased student retention rates and faster and more culturally appropriate support to youth in contact with police (Case Study 6).

"There are already successes including massive reductions in domestic violence, but it's also provided the glue for the community to come together."

NSW HEALTH MINISTER BRAD HAZZARD

SPSP communities are improving outcomes for families by facilitating agreement to use existing resources differently. Significant change can come about through obtaining collective agreement to use existing resources differently in response to community needs. For example, by centring First Nations voices in discussions about how to deliver more appropriate services that support early childhood development and healthy, safe family environments.

Backbone Teams are playing a crucial role in bringing diverse organisations together to talk, listen, learn and jointly identify what changes are within the authority of local actors. It is clear that these small changes in behaviour can have significant flow on effects.

In Eagleby, more than eight government, service sector,

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13 Data collated via Seer from Maranguka Daily Check Ins.

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philanthropic and community-controlled organisations came together to consider health and early childhood development services that would meet the cultural and access needs of the community. Solutions were identified by thinking creatively about how up to $2million in existing resources within their authority might be re-designed. (Case Study 5).

Disengaged youth and families are accessing crucial support in the early to middle years. Community members from youth to industry and local teachers have ideas; from providing safe spaces for youth after hours to initiatives that open up education and employment pathways for children, Backbone Teams enable these to come to life. As a result, children are safer, have better access to social services, and are more likely to stay in education, employment or training.

In Burnie, a multi-pronged initiative has supported over 3,000 children to consider their aspirations, visit educational and employment sites and connect with potential employers. The initiative is contributing to increased year 12 completion (from 56% in 2011 to 86% in 2020)14 and reduced unemployment. The Backbone Team facilitated industry, business and education to implement their vision of supporting young people to develop vocational pathways and create a strong regional skills base for emerging economic opportunities (Case Study 7).

HomeBase Hoops in Mildura (Case Study 8) provides a safe space for youth, in a context where alcohol and drug use, family violence rates and youth unemployment are all significantly higher than the state average. This idea from local youth has seen over 200 youth connect with peers and build trust with adults in the community, including police officers.

> *"I can't thank you enough for listening to me and being committed to this initiative of mine for youth… For me, sports was the only thing that I could count on each week to help me with everything."*
>
> **CHLOE LOCAL YOUTH**

3. Backbone Teams are essential to community-led change

Communities are securing new infrastructure, more appropriate services and using evidence to inform planning decisions. This means children, families and communities are now able to access health and social care that helps them live happier, healthier lives and be more connected to society.

Backbone Teams help turn what the community knows they need into reality. Backbone Teams collect and analyse data, undertake consultations, map existing services and identify gaps. They form and sustain partnerships, amplify community voices, advocate on behalf of the community, influence key stakeholders and support negotiations.

Backbones understand that agencies are funded to deliver services, not to review population-level outcomes and collectively advocate, across multiple sectors, for the community's needs. The Backbone Teams play a critical role in a systems approach. They consciously identify connections within a system, with attention to the impacts on children and families' abilities to thrive. They are from and of the community and remain engaged for as long as it takes for the opportunities to be realised.

Whether childcare and early learning services, housing, or support to recover from substance misuse, Backbone Teams provide the local governance infrastructure to drive better outcomes for individuals and families.

In the Far West of South Australia, the Backbone Team worked with government partners, service providers and community to secure culturally appropriate sobering up service provision. By mapping needs and existing services, understanding each partner's interests and encouraging small changes on all sides, they have contributed to a community-controlled organisation being awarded a contract to manage sobering up services. As a result, 90% of those using the

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14 https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/about/data/attainment-profiles-direct-continuation-data/hellyer-college/

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services are able to access a facility run by their own community within a culturally safe way (Case Study 9). The governance structure provides accountability to the community and better oversight and understanding of the impact that alcohol misuse is having on their community. It is anticipated that this will contribute to the community-controlled sector looking at better linkages between services and support required for their community. It contributes to Closing the Gap Priority Reform 2: Building the Community-controlled sector.

The Hands Up Mallee team played a crucial role in finding and analysing data to support credible and accurate advocacy for much needed new infrastructure (Case Study 11). Their efforts contributed to the Mallee securing $36 million in funding for an inpatient Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) withdrawal and rehabilitation facility. Having a local facility will lead to an increase in the number of people accessing AOD rehabilitation, by removing the barrier of long travel distances to seek care. It is hoped the new facility will contribute to reducing crime rates, family violence, inter-generational trauma, and children being placed in out-of-home care.

Through supporting a unique intergenerational music program, Hands Up Mallee also contributed to the development of one of Australia's first Intergenerational Childcare facilities co-located with an Aged Care Facility.[15] The increased long-day care places will significantly contribute to better outcomes for young children in community and improve readiness for school.

> *"We needed someone to coordinate everything and pull all the players together. We were all doing 'our bit' – but we needed to do it in a more strategic way. Hands Up Mallee played that role."*
>
> **PATSY DOOLAN, ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY MEMBER**

Backbone Teams are strengthening local governance structures and accountability for disrupting disadvantage. Both Gladstone Region engaging in action

Together and Far West Community Partnerships are newer members of the SPSP community. Yet in a few years they have significantly contributed to community members shifting their understanding of their own role in leading change. These Backbone Teams are part of a growing movement towards self-determination and empowerment. Where communities share accountability for identifying, designing, implementing and monitoring services and investments. As well as holding service providers and governments accountable, they are in turn accountable to the community and are stepping into greater shared decision-making roles.

In Gladstone, the Backbone Team facilitated establishment of a cross-sectoral group to capture lessons, local knowledge and collate data to inform equitable growth planning. This approach is aimed at mitigating the risks of rapid growth by learning from the last LNG boom. That boom saw low income families and aged residents experience financial stress and displacement as a result of an increasing cost of living and housing market constraints. The group of government, industry and not-for-profit representatives has mapped current capacity and pressures, understand changing demographics in the region and therefore develop local planning solutions. Governments have shared closed source data to support these efforts, building trust with local leaders and encouraging community ownership of planning for their future. (Case Study 10)

The Far West region in South Australia is the only place where both Empowered Communities[16] and SPSP initiatives exist. The FWCP Backbone Team have developed a unique model combining SPSP ways of working with the joint decision-making framework of EC. Evidence throughout this report shows that Backbone Teams provide the necessary infrastructure to support local leadership. The FWCP model demonstrates that it is SPSPs specific approach that enables achievement of a reform agenda shared and led by the whole community. As well as the capabilities in the Backbone to take an evidence based and systemic view to delivering against that shared agenda (Case Study 12).

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15 www.generationselc.com.au

16 Empowered Communities is a Commonwealth supported initiative that supports empowerment of Indigenous leaders to work with government and corporate Australia to reform how Indigenous policies and programs are designed and delivered.

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CONCLUSION

SPSP communities are demonstrating that by taking a whole-of-community approach to addressing disadvantage, children and families are connected, valued and safe. Tangible examples of improved education, health, social, economic and cultural wellbeing for children is the outcome.

Bringing diverse perspectives together is resulting in partnerships that have the capability and willingness to test new ideas to old problems. This involves new ways of working, listening to different voices and reimagining how existing resources can be used to meet community needs. New partnerships are having ripple effects, spawning further ideas for how to reach vulnerable groups and have greater impact. As successes at community-level are celebrated we are starting to see the building blocks of regional, state and national level partnerships.

Backbone Teams are essential to these outcomes. They are the engines behind community-led change. Without the local level governance infrastructure, and ways of working that SPSP Backbone Teams provide, the early examples of impact demonstrated in this report would not have happened.
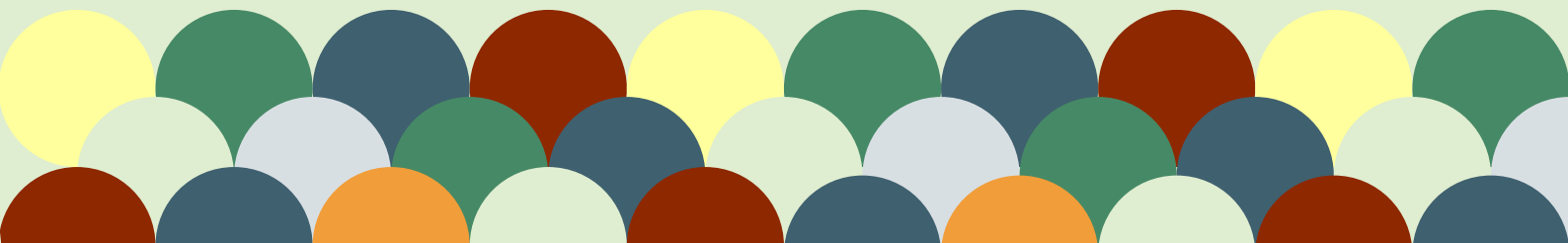
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ANNEX 1

CONTRIBUTING TO AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY PRIORITIES

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SPSP Community	Closing the Gap	Early Years	Youth	Justice and Family Safety	Health, Wellbeing and Aged Care	Education and Skills	Housing	Jobs and Employment
Burnie Works	• First Nations leadership and engagement	• Restacking the Odds • First 1000 Days • Works with CB • CYWB Data project with Tasmanian Government	• Dream Big • Up Close and Big • Youth Council • Youth Making Changes around Burnie • More for Children (ANU)	• Justice Group (youth justice, family safety)	• First 1000 Days • Mental Health Action Plan • CAPITOL Project	• Books in Homes • Knowledge Collector Project • Dream Big • Up Close and Big	• Community Support for Youth Foyer and other youth accommodation initiatives	• Hosting Tas Govt Regional Jobs Hub • Host Employment Partnership Group • Youth Pathways Program
Far West Community Partnerships	• Empowered Communities joint decision-making • Driving data sovereignty • Transforming government through partnerships on policy and funding design	• Leading the Ceduna Services Collaboration • Christmas toy drive • Relationship building with CB	• Community Festival • Forming a Regional Education Reform Strategy and Working Group • Supporting Youth Leadership Project	• Social Reinvestment strategy including leading creation of "nunga court" Partnership with Red Cross Community Hub and satellite service hubs in community	• Covid-19 response – culturally appropriate isolation policies, and facilities • Development of Health and Wellbeing Regional Development Strategy	• Forming a Regional Education Reform Strategy and Working Group	• Shared Decision making with South Australian Housing Authority on the Aboriginal Housing Strategy • Development of Regional Housing and Infrastructure Strategy	• Supporting and empowering ACCOs • Regional Economic Development and Employment Strategy
Gladstone Region engaging in Action Together	• First Nations Leadership Group • Identification and analysis of data that supports Indigenous self-determination	• Child health assessments • Early Intervention Strategy – shared cross-sector service capacity (reduced waitlists)	• Data project identifying representation in youth support programs	• Child protection data and analysis - informing target locations and cohorts • Voices of Resilience – photographic case studies)	• Integrated Service Sector Working Groups • Rio Tinto Partnership – Gladstone Region Wellbeing Data Hub – community owned data asset	• Upskilling and motivating community to engage in systems change	• Growth Management Planning Working Group • Housing Supports Working Group – data and place-based solutions	• Skills Attraction Workshop (KPMG), strategies; employer toolkit • Partner with Rio Tinto on data hub
Hands Up Mallee	• First Nations leadership and engagement in governance • First Nations representation in all aspects of the work	• One of Australia's first Intergenerational Early Years Services co-located with an Aged Care facility • Fun in the park • Rich Home Learning Environment • Voices of Children	• Engaging youth in a co-design process to set priority actions for youth focused activity • HomeBase Hoops • HomeBase development partner – an after hours youth drop in service	• Developing early responses to local youth disengagement and problem behaviours in culturally appropriate ways alongside community leaders	• Coordinated Covid-19 local Emergency Food Relief Response • Covid-19 vaccination active outreach model • Drug and alcohol Rehabilitation centre • Generations Music Together program	• Providing paid opportunities for community expertise • Supporting community members to apply for voluntary and paid opportunities through providing Backbone references	• Continually raising Housing as an issue in community which impacts on children, young people and families • Presenting housing data to highlight issues in community	• Supported community members to have input into recently announced local Department of Transport review
Logan Together	• FN leadership (Gnirigomindala Karulbo) guiding LT strategy and decision-making • Dedicated FN Maternal and Child Health Hub • Walking Together for Logan's Children - strengthening ACCOs	• Logan's Early Childhood Development system • Restacking the Odds framework • The Logan Core Suite • Toddler Development Index to offer new insights into developmental status at Age 2		• Walking Together for Logan's Children – authentic co-design of community-led solutions for Logan's child protection system	• Maternal and Child Health Hubs • Targeted nurse home visiting (right@home) and early diagnosis and referral for developmental delays (Thriving and on Track) • Eagleby Early Childhood Development	• Working to realise data sovereignty and data literacy by providing access to community data • Building local Backbone Teams • Engaging in cultural Training across movement • Two-way learning philosophy	• Identified in 2022 Collective Plan as major strategic focus	• Identified in 2022 Collective Plan as major strategic focus
Maranguka	• Joint decision making and First Nations leadership - CSLG • Data sovereignty	• Welcome baby to country • Baby Expo • Connected Beginnings co-located • Healthy Kids Bus Stop	• Daily check-ins addressing youth crime and disengagement • Tribal Links (night patrol) • Afternoon Activities ie: Touch Footy, Dance Workshops	• Justice Reinvestment in Bourke. • Return to Community • *How to work in Bourke* Collaboration Agreements		• Supporting community re-entry to Education • The Rising Star Program - increase school attendance and student participation.		

ANNEX 2

CASE STUDIES

COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE IS DISRUPTING DISADVANTAGE

PARTNERSHIPS ARE KEY TO COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE

EQUITY DURING COVID-19

CHILD & FAMILY SAFETY

YOUTH JUSTICE & FAMILY SAFETY

EARLY LEARNING

WELCOME BABY TO COUNTRY

EDUCATION PATHWAYS

JOINT DECISION MAKING

MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH HUBS

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

CHILD & AGED CARE, REHABILITATION

DATA & LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

COMMUNITY CONTROLLED SERVICES

BACKBONE TEAMS ARE ESSENTIAL TO COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Maranguka (Bourke, NSW)
WELCOME BABY TO COUNTRY

1

THE SITUATION

Bourke is a small community comprising 24 Tribal/ Clan groups. Some of the Tribal descendants have been living in Bourke for three generations and this is now where they are most culturally and spiritually connected to country. It is home. Sadly, some of these people have never stepped foot on their ancestors traditional lands. This disconnection from country impacts their mental health, identity and social and emotional well-being, as recognised in the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017–2023.*

Participation in cultural activities, access to traditional lands, connection with kinship and cultural identity have been recognised as positively influencing overall health and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples.[1]

> "...data shows that Indigenous Australians who lived on their homelands or traditional Country were more likely to assess their own health as excellent/very good/good (78%) than those who were not allowed to visit their homelands or traditional Country (47%)."

ABS 2019

From 2020, maternal health services were not available in Bourke and as a result women ceased having the opportunity to birth on country. The nearest birthing facility is in Dubbo, a four hour drive away. Aboriginal women face a financial burden to access transport and accommodation for at least two weeks, including for family members who may accompany them for support during this time.

As Traditional Custodians of the land it is important to the Aboriginal mother to be able to birth on Country to ensure a continued spiritual connection to land, community and ancestors for both the mother and child. Birthing off-country breaks this link and is believed to cause social and spiritual issues for the mother and child.

THE INITIATIVE

In 2017 during the Maranguka Early Childhood Working Group meeting, an idea to host a Welcome Baby to Country ceremony was raised as a way to meet the community's cultural expectations and express self-determination. The Working Group agreed that such a ceremony would assist in reconciling familial connection to ancestors and Country.
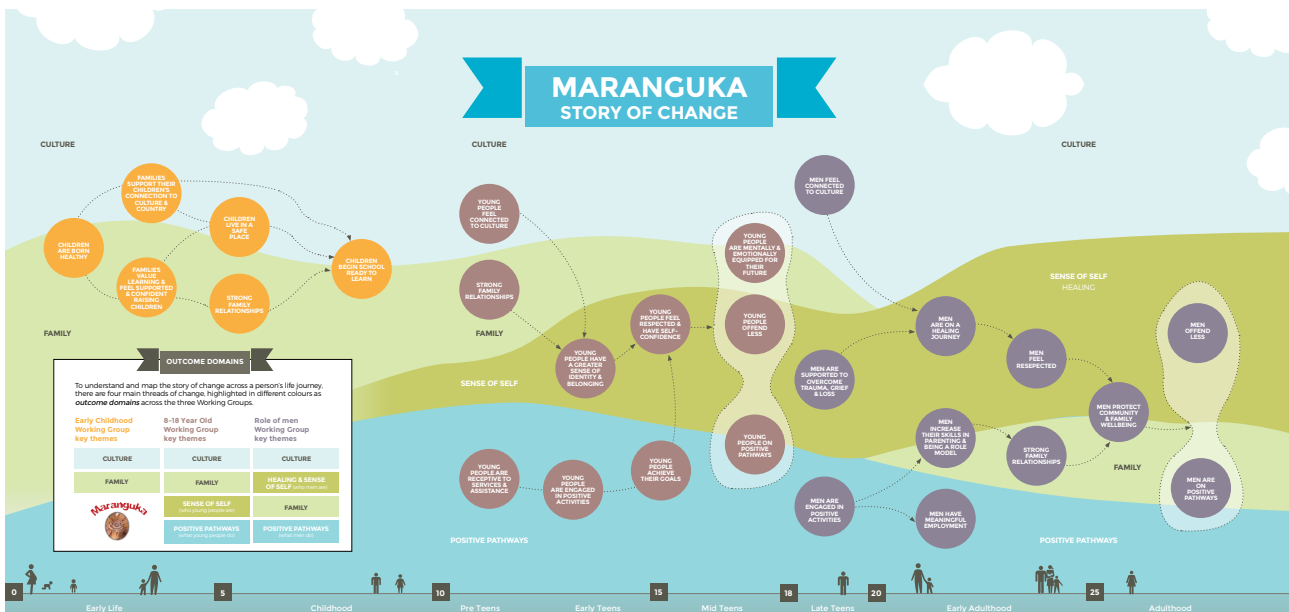
With the support and continued efforts of Maranguka

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1   Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2017): https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/social-determinants-and-indigenous-health

Photo: Community members participating in the ceremony. Courtesy of Maranguka Backbone Team.

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to keep this on the agenda, in 2021 the first successful event was held with 37 participants. Western NSW Local Health District (NSWLHD) led the initiative in collaboration with Maranguka and other services.

A Story of Change framework was developed to map what a Safe Smart Strong Strategy could positively contribute to children, young people and families.

The story, as set out in the image, addresses four key domains of culture, family, healing, sense of self and positive pathways.

It is intended that as a result of the activities in the framework, including children having connection to culture, children and families will be on positive pathways, equipped for their future and offending less.

> "Introducing our babies to community is a traditional practice that has been implemented for generations and dates back thousands of years. The ceremony is a significant event for our babies to connect to our Community, Country and also Elders."

PAT CANTY, MANAGER OF ABORIGINAL PARTNERSHIPS, WESTERN NSW LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT

The inaugural event was an uplifting celebration of culture and community. Children from Bourke and District Children's Service did an acknowledgement to country in language. The Bourke Tribal Council conducted a smoking ceremony inviting all to walk through the smoke to cleanse their spirit. The men from Dinawan's Connection led children from Maranguka dance group in performing cultural dances. The Bourke Shire Council Mayor, Barry Holman made an address.

In 2022 the Welcome Baby to Country event was held as part of NAIDOC week celebrations. The 2022 event welcomed 102 community members including 34 babies, 68 children and young people from 1 years old to 18 years of age who were not birthed on country. The event is inclusive and extended the welcome to non-Aboriginal children. Partners involved include government agencies, service providers, Bourke Shire Council, cultural organisations and Tribal Council elders.

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THE IMPACT

Welcome Baby to Country has created a space where mothers are empowered and supported to participate in traditional practices. As a result, over 139 children are growing up with a stronger connection to country and culture and sense of belonging. Creating more opportunity for children to thrive. Research shows that almost half of the health gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians is due to the impact of cultural and historical factors on health and access to health services.[2]

Parents spoke about the beauty of the ceremony and the importance of bringing their children up to be strong and proud of their culture.

"Our children are our future. Both mothers and fathers have a huge responsibility to give their children the best possible opportunities in life to allow them to flourish."

COMMUNITY MEMBER

In 2022, a tribute to pay respects and remember Aunty Ruby Eulo, the last traditional Aboriginal midwife, who sadly passed, was included in the ceremony. A photo sat on the stage, it was like she was watching over everyone giving her blessing. Aunty Ruby's grandson, Brian Smith designed the Aboriginal artwork for the flyer and grandson, Ben Orcher played the didgeridoo during the smoking ceremony. It was an emotional and proud moment for her grandchildren and great great grandchildren whom participated in this special event.

Members of the Maranguka Early Childhood Working Group are discussing combining future ceremonies with the "Baby Expo" which facilitates access to maternal and child health services particularly for first time mothers. This will strengthen efforts to ensure Aboriginal people have access to health and other services needed to change the trajectory of poor health outcomes.

2   Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/social-determinants-and-indigenous-health

Photos: Community members participating in the Welcome Baby to Country ceremony. Photos courtesy of Maranguka Backbone Team.

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CONCLUSIONS – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE BACKBONE TEAM?

In 2016 Maranguka convened the Maranguka Early Childhood and Parenting Working Group to change the siloed way services operate. The working group is comprised of government agencies, service providers and community groups from across the service sector and meets quarterly. It was members of the working group who made Welcome Baby to Country come to life. The Maranguka Backbone Team ensured the initiative aligned with the Safe Smart Strong Strategy (SSS) outcome: Families support their children's connection to culture and country.

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

TARGET 4:

Children thrive in their early years

TARGET 14:

People enjoy high levels of emotional and social wellbeing

TARGET 15:

People maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters

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Logan Together (Logan, QLD)
LOGAN COMMUNITY MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH HUBS

2

COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY

This case study has been written by the Logan Together Backbone Team in support of the Logan Together movement. The story, information and outcomes of this work belong to community and Logan Together partners.

THE SITUATION

International evidence[1] reveals the benefits of midwifery-led continuity of care as having a positive effect on every health outcome for mothers and babies. However, when Logan Together formed in 2015 women in:[2]

- The Logan region generally, had one of the lowest rates of antenatal attendance across Queensland[3]
- The Logan region generally, were more likely to smoke during pregnancy[4]
- Specific Logan communities were more likely to have babies with a low birth weight[5].

Analysis of data available in 2015 showed that each year between 500 and 600 women in Logan were accessing little or no care during their pregnancy, and many of those who received support did not receive continuity of midwifery care. Services were regarded by some women and staff as institution-centric, highly medicalised, authoritarian, and not creating an environment that enabled the delivery of evidence-based care. There was a lack of trust in the health service, and women reported language and cultural barriers and institutional racism.

THE INITIATIVE

In 2015, maternity care was identified as a key area of focus and action for the Logan community. Logan Together supported a co-design process involving 500 women from diverse backgrounds and over 20 organisations. This saw the Logan Together Backbone Team undertake extensive relationship brokerage, use national and international evidence, and put community at the heart of designing a culturally safe, sustainable and highly effective midwife-supported continuity of care model.

The co-design process was lengthy and multifaceted, occurring from late 2015 to late 2016. It involved understanding how women wanted their maternal care delivered spiritually and culturally, and to work with them to design it. The process generated a social model with relationships and trust at the centre, rather than a medical model of maternal and child health care provision. The recommended relationship-based continuity of midwifery care model became the basis

1   Allen, J, Gibbons, K, Beckmann, M, Tray, M, Stapleton, H, & Kildea, S (2015). Does model of maternity care make a difference to birth outcomes for young women? A retrospective cohort study. International Journal of Nursing Studies, 52
2   https://metrosouth.health.qld.gov.au/maternity-hubs/background
3   7% of women in the Logan region did not attend the recommended number of antenatal appointments, compared to 5% Queensland state average
4   15% of mothers in Logan smoked after 20 weeks gestation, compared to 10% Queensland state average. Some specific areas of the Logan community had gestational smoking as high as 27% smoking after 20 weeks.
5   14.8% of babies were born with a low birth weight in specific Logan communities, compared to 7% Queensland state average

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of the Logan Community Maternal and Child Health Hubs. Women were able to continue to offer their perspectives through co-design meetings, Talanoa Circles (a traditional Pasifika approach for inclusive community conversations and dialogues), public events, a survey through Logan Mums and Bubs Facebook group, and community engagement through key organisations. Governance structures were set up, including an external Logan Community Maternity and Child Health Oversight Committee. On the committee were representatives from community groups, NGOs, consumers, Primary Health Network, Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union (QNMU), university and internal stakeholders.

In late 2016, a joint model and costing was provided to Queensland Government by Metro South Health and Logan Together on behalf of collaborating partners. Queensland Government funding was secured in 2017.

THE WIDER CONTEXT

During 2015-17, Health Consumers Queensland, consumers from a range of organisations, and Logan Together used strategic and influential advocacy to draw political attention to the urgency of improving child maternal health in Logan and the need for funding. This also involved supporting champions and advocates to engage with government and influence decision makers who could help progress the work. The success of the collective advocacy, compared with previous attempts to get the Hubs concept off the ground, was influenced by the extent of community engagement, the strategy to rally cross-system support, and to pursue a shared way with 'one voice'.

One of the turning points that helped overcome some of the early challenges was when stakeholders put energy into developing a program logic for an 'ideal model' which fostered shared ownership of a possible solution. Momentum was also maintained through many intensive rounds of negotiation and dialogues when challenges arose. This process, and the sometimes 'hard conversations' was convened

and supported by Logan Together, the Maternity Hubs Project Group and Health Consumers Queensland.

THE IMPACT

Four Logan-based community-located Maternity Hubs and a complex care service were established in 2018. All cater for women with significant social risk. Specifically, one caters for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, one for Māori and Pacific Island women, one for young women under 18 years old, and one for refugee and culturally diverse women. Each Maternity Hub is unique to its focus community. By mid-2020, the Maternity Hubs had scaled to support close to 1,000 women and the midwifery workforce had increased from 12 in 2019 to 33 by March 2020.

The success of these hubs is augmented by the Community Connectors who help the expectant mothers navigate maternal and child health services throughout pregnancy and into the early stages of life with their new baby.

The 2018-2021 achievements of the Community Maternal and Child Health Hubs included:

- The rate of First Nations still births at the Maternity Hubs is now 0.3% compared with rates in other parts of Queensland of between 1% and 5%

- Mothers experienced higher screening rates for alcohol use and domestic violence than in mainstream care
- Increased uptake of antenatal care by the target population (Maori, Pasifika women, young women, refugee and asylum-seeking women and First Nations women)[6]
- 92% of women rated the Midwife Group Practice hubs as 'very good'[7]
- 99% of women would recommend Midwife Group Practice hubs to family and friends
- 92% of women felt they were always involved in decision-making
- 85% of staff were satisfied or highly satisfied working in Midwife Group Practices
- Economic benefits[8] 2020-2021: minimum saving of 13% on the cost of a hospital-based midwifery model; and more than $0.5m savings due to a reduction in birth interventions (specifically, reduced days in hospital, increased number of natural births and reduced staffing costs).

Based on Hub outcomes to date, it is believed that an extension and increased investment in Maternity Hubs in Logan would result in:

- Reduced Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) admissions which currently overflow to hospitals outside of Logan
- Reduced post-natal re-admissions to hospital for mother and baby
- Reduced levels of smoking amongst pregnant women
- Reduced intergenerational disadvantage and trauma
- Improved APGAR[9] scores
- Improved early management and outcomes for mothers and babies experiencing complexities such as diabetes.

Given the demonstrated success of the four established Maternity Hubs in Logan, a public commitment has been made to ensure that by 2024, 50% of pregnant women in Logan will be offered a midwife-led care option through Maternity Hubs in the community or Midwife Group Practice through Logan Hospital.

CONCLUSIONS – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE BACKBONE TEAM?

The Maternity Hubs have achieved a range of statistically significant perinatal outcomes compared to standard care in Logan. The effectiveness of the Hubs is credited to the continuity of midwifery care model and in-community location of care. These were a direct result of the inclusive community engagement and co-

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6   Logan Community Maternal and Child Health Hubs (2021).
7   Clear Horizon; Main Report The Case for Collective Impact (2021)
8   Logan Community Maternity and Child Health Hubs Cost Analysis. A full Social Return on Investment (SROI) is underway
9   An APGAR test is a quick test performed on a baby at 1 and 5 minutes after birth to determine the Appearance, Pulse, Grimace, Activity, and Respiration (APGAR) responses of the baby and whether any medical intervention is required

Photos: Courtesy of Logan Community Maternal and Child Health Hubs, created for their Vision and Prospectus.

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design with women, driven by the Collective Impact practice driven by the Logan Together Backbone Team.

Recent contribution analysis commissioned by the Department of Social Services[10] showed that the Hubs, and subsequent outcomes, would not have happened without the Collective Impact practice driven by the Logan Together Backbone Team. The Logan Together Backbone Team demonstrated leadership to change the system, brought its collective impact framework to define a new 'way of working' and community engagement process, and drove momentum.

meant community preferences genuinely informed the model of care developed which in turn led to better service engagement and experiences.

Growing the movement for change and the necessary capacity saw the Logan Together Backbone Team walk alongside community and with champions in hospital settings who were prepared to advocate for change. Creating the conditions for the Hubs to be culturally safe for both women and service/system partners took dedicated trust building and intensive support.

We know that patterns for future life outcomes are established in the first 1000 days of life, beginning in pregnancy.[11] By improving both the birthing experience and health outcomes for mums, babies and families in statistically significant ways, Logan Community Maternity and Child Health Hubs help families feel valued and ready to positively contribute to their children's improved health, disrupting disadvantage and intergenerational trauma.

The Collective Impact practice of Logan Together was a key factor that differentiated the results from previous attempts to evolve the Hubs concept and prior programmatic responses seeking to affect maternity and birthing outcomes. Collective Impact practice underpinned the way partners worked together and navigated barriers and challenges. It was an enabling force and included strategic and persistent collective advocacy that led to funding and sustained momentum. Inclusive engagement was a key factor for success and

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10 Clear Horizon; Main Report The Case for Collective Impact (2021)
11 McKenzie, F. & DaCosta, R Early Childhood Development in Australia: challenging the system

Photos: Courtesy of Logan Community Maternal and Child Health Hubs, created for their Vision and Prospectus.

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CASE STUDY

Faisa[12] realised she was pregnant in 2016 after arriving in Australia from Somalia. At the time, both her English and her support network were limited. At 41 weeks Faisa presented to hospital experiencing limited baby movements. Tragically her unborn daughter had passed away in utero. Faisa had been unable to express her concerns for her baby at routine maternity appointments which left her with a deep sadness and mistrust of the hospital system, care providers and the interpreter service. During her second pregnancy Faisa was referred to the Access Hub. Staff at the Hub were slowly able to build trust with her and build a relationship with the primary obstetrician looking after her.

In 2021, when expecting her next baby, Faisa contacted the Hub directly. This pregnancy was healthy and uncomplicated. She was relaxed in the antenatal period and trusted her care which helped her develop trust in her body and her own choices with regard to her pregnancy. While it is not routine to attempt vaginal birth after 2-C sections, with the strong support from our Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) service and obstetrician Faisa felt safe to do so. This delivery was approved was successful. This has now developed trust between our service and Logan Hospital for future Mums.

"I come from a big family and a strong community back in New Zealand. Now there is a community here. I feel culturally safe and able to bring family into my appointments. It takes a village to raise a child and to learn from each other."

LOGAN RESIDENT AND HUB USER

"It helped to have another Indigenous person guide me on my way. At hospital you don't really see many Indigenous people there."

HUB RESPONDENT FROM SURVEY OF WOMEN, 2020 EVALUATION REPORT

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

TARGET 2:

Children are born healthy and strong

12   Not her real name.

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Burnie Works (Burnie, TAS)
EARLY LEARNING

3

THE SITUATION

International and national research into learning shows the benefits of early engagement with reading to children's literacy, educational attainment, social outcomes, employability.[1]

A 20-year global study found that having books in homes has as much of an impact on a child's educational outcomes as the educational level of their parents.[2] While those with poor educational outcomes in Australia "tend to have poorer health outcomes, lower incomes and reduced employment prospects".[3]

The Tasmanian Department of Education data on 14,000 Launch into Learning (LiL)'s participants over seven years shows the impact on learning outcomes of children who engage with early learning services.

Regular attendance LiLs had a demonstrable difference across all parental education levels, across all reading and literacy checks/assessments, … than those who did not attend as children progressed through schooling, including up to Year 3.

The Department of Education advised that in the period 2015-2020 there was low family engagement with early learning programs. From 2020, with the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a further reduction in family engagement with the Tasmanian LiL's program.

Initial feedback from community members was that this lack of engagement was due to fears around child and family safety, social anxiety and isolation, and parents feeling ill-equipped to support their child's learning.

THE INITIATIVE

Increased awareness of early learning and support for children to enhance preparedness to start school is a priority for the Burnie community as reflected in the Burnie Works 2020-2030 Plan.

The University of Tasmania trialled *Books in Homes* in schools across Tasmania, including a school in Burnie in 2015. *Books in Homes* is an Australian charitable foundation that provides books of choice to children in disadvantaged and low socio-economic circumstances, supporting crucial early literacy engagement and skills and aims to address generational poverty by enhancing early education.

In 2020 the Burnie Works Backbone Team brought together partners from the Tasmanian Department of Education, Burnie Library, Burnie Child and Family Centre and Burnie Works Families Group to adapt and roll out this initiative to our community.

In 2015 the Books in Homes trial by the University of Tasmania in a Burnie primary school revealed that the program not only assisted children in early literacy but was also of value to parents in supporting their children.

Based on feedback from LiL's Coordinators and with the knowledge of the Books in Homes trial, the Back Bone Team brought together key partners to discuss how Books in Homes could be expanded. Partners emphasised that it was important to trial a whole of community approach – to reach disadvantaged families, those not engaging with early education services, and

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1   https://booksinhomes.com.au/
2   Science Daily. (21 May 2010). Books in home as important as parents' education in determining children's education level. ScienceDaily. Reno: University of Nevada. Retrieved on 9 September 2018.
3   Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. (2016). Closing the Gap: Prime Minister's Report 2016. Canberra, ACT: Australian Government. Retrieved on 9 September 2018.

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to contribute to establishing more connections across the community.

Based on the input from partners about need and the international evidence of the benefits of early engagement, the early years ages 0-4 was selected as the trial group. It was important to the Families Group that the ceremonies providing the books to families were held in the Launching into Learning locations because families were already comfortable with these sites and the first year of its child and youth wellbeing strategy It Takes Tasmanian Village. It has also recently committed to universal access to early to pre-school in the year before kindergarten

THE WIDER CONTEXT

The Tasmanian Government has recognised the importance of early learning through the development of the Launching into Learning program and the roll-out of Child and Family Learning Centres across the state. It has also implemented Working Together, a program supporting vulnerable parents to access early childhood education.

THE IMPACT

In 2021 Burnie Works provided $35,000 seed funding for this community-designed initiative. As a result:

- Over two terms, 279 early childhood packs and 253 pre-school packs were delivered to children.
- LiL's coordinators have reported that families are engaging with early learning programs that hadn't previously
- Of 52 survey responses from children and families 90% reported liking their books a lot and 87% of parents/caregivers reported enjoying reading books with their children
- Pre-school teachers reported that parents who have struggled in group or educational settings were motivated by their children receiving the books. And the ceremony and social engagement helped them to reconnect with other families and the school environment.[4]

In addition, pre-school teachers reported that parents who had previously struggled to attend LiL's sessions, or with reading, were now keen to be involved in the program due to the Books in Homes packs. Coming to the LiL's program has resulted in these parents making connections with other families and to feel comfortable in a school setting.

Based on feedback from schools around 50 previously disengaged families are part of the LiL's program as a result of Books in Homes.

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4   Cooee Primary School letter, August 2022

Photo: A child receiving his books. Courtesy of Burnie Works.

CONCLUSIONS – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE BACKBONE TEAM?

Enhancing the number of families in Burnie who are engaging with early learning programs, is a contribution towards the longer term health, employment and wellbeing outcomes of over 530 children. Including approximately 50 families who were not otherwise engaged.

Research shows that this represents better health, employment and social outcomes for individuals, and reduced costs to society of the alternative.[5]

This wouldn't have happened without the BBT who identified the need, brought partners together, collated the evidence base, facilitated the community-led design and provided the initial seed funding.

Burnie Works is working with the Tasmanian Department of Education to develop long term indicators to track the impact on these families and the children's educational outcomes over time, and is working with local service groups to continue to fund the program.

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

TARGET 3:

Children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years.

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5   Heckman. (2018). Social Media Content: Early Investments and Return on Investment for ECE/Childcare. Retrieved from https://heckmanequation.org/resource/social-posts-early-investments-and-return-on-investment-for-ece-childcare/

Photo: A child receiving her books. Courtesy of Burnie Works.

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Hands Up Mallee (Mildura, VIC)
RESPONSES TO EMERGENT NEEDS DURING COVID-19

4

THE SITUATION

COVID-19 shone a light on the existing inequities in many Australian communities, with people already experiencing disadvantage the most impacted by COVID and its impacts.[1][2]

Located in the far North-West of Victoria, over 540 kilometres from Melbourne, on the border of New South Wales, Mildura's isolation and proximity to a state border amplified the isolating effect of pandemic related restrictions and shortages. Many community members, businesses and services rely on access to cross-border travel to meet economic, health, education and social needs.

As borders between states closed and lock-downs restricted movement, access to food, support and access to medicine for people already experiencing disadvantage became even more difficult. Individuals and families in the Mildura Local Government Area (LGA) were struggling to satisfy their basic material needs, given the existing high rates of food insecurity experienced in the region pre-pandemic. Given the high rates of food insecurity experience in Mildura,[3] it became clear that a coordinated local response was required to meet the increasing food relief need. In addition, there was a need to ensure equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine.

In 2021 the HUM Backbone Team were involved in the local vaccination roll-out to help reach parts of the community who were experiencing barriers to accessing vaccination.

THE INITIATIVES

In March 2020, Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) and the Hands Up Mallee (HUM) Backbone Team had a conversation about addressing the food security needs of our most vulnerable community members. Given HUM's extensive networks, relationships and experience in leading large-scale collaboration, MRCC asked HUM to scope and coordinate options for an immediate municipal food relief response.

The HUM Backbone Team mapped the emergency food relief network and resource flows. This enabled HUM and MRCC to better understand where funding for food relief was coming from, where it was going, and how it might be collectively pooled for greater impact. HUM then took a leadership role alongside MRCC to convene

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1   Jones et al., "COVID-19 pandemic: The impact on vulnerable children and young people in Australia," Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health, Dec 2020, Vol. 56, Issue 12. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/14401754/2020/56/12

2   Shergold, P et al., "Fault Lines: An independent review into Australia's response to COVID-19", 20 October, 2022, Paul Ramsay Foundation, https://www.paulramsayfoundation.org.au/news-resources/fault-lines-an-independent-review-into-australias-response-to-covid-19

3   Population health survey, 2020 (Victoria)

Photo: The Active Outreach Vaccination and Testing team at work. Photo courtesy of the HUM Backbone Team.

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10 organisations in a collaborative partnership and built the necessary structures and systems to support a collective response to community need.

A centralised Food Hub for emergency food relief packing and distribution was established at the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC) and MRCC re-deployed staff to operate emergency food relief distribution services. MRCC established a centralised Community Emergency Relief and Response (CERR) unit within council and re-deployed staff to handle all emergency food relief and other requests, such as medication delivery and shopping assistance. The Backbone Team wrote a referral support decision-making manual which guided the MRCC CERR unit. The HUM Backbone Team and MRCC coordinated the pooling of existing resources within community from local service providers to collectively purchase food and supplies for the food parcels.

As the pandemic progressed it became clear that community members were more likely to accept the help they needed from a known, trusted person than someone they didn't know. HUM used their extensive existing networks to involve schools, kindergartens, the Victorian Police and Aboriginal community members to deliver food parcels to community members with whom they were already in contact.

In 2021, Hands Up Mallee's role in the work of ensuring community members experiencing vulnerability had equitable access to vaccines took many forms:

Targeted work - to reach people in our community who experienced multiple-barriers to vaccine access.

Led efforts to secure funding for active-outreach vaccination - through the Backbone Team negotiating with the Primary Health Network.

Bring partners together to leverage the workforce and reach into community - Many of the partners had never worked together before. HUM worked with organisations and people who were deeply connected to the community to determine how

and when it was best to do the work and how best to communicate with the community. We worked in small, agile groups that developed bespoke models suited to different geographical and cultural communities. For example, our planning and approach for the clinic in Red Cliffs (a small satellite town) was entirely different to our method of reaching asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants without Medicare cards.

Drawing on long-term, trusted relationships to get things done - key to the initiative's success was the ability to quickly connect with partners, based on trust and previous achievements, reach an agreement and move to action quickly.

Listening, responding and adapting to community needs and feedback - The default position of services is to assume they know what the community needs. Particularly in times of emergency when timeframes are tight, and decisions need to be made quickly. Hands Up Mallee played an important role in liaising with and listening to the community about where, when and how active outreach testing and vaccination needed to occur in a way that was right for them.

Photo: The Active Outreach Vaccination and Testing team celebrating their efforts. Courtesy of HUM Backbone Team.

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THE IMPACT

The establishment of the CERR in the Mildura LGA was a rapid collaborative response to need within the local community as a result of COVID-19 exacerbating existing inequities. Between March and November 2020, the Community Emergency Relief and Response effort:

- Connected 3354 people with food relief or other services
- Delivered 899 Food Parcels
- Delivered 171 Activity Packs for children and families
- Resulted in 194 referrals between organisations – supporting more coordinated and streamlined support services for families.

Key changes as a result of the collaborative response include:

- Community members experienced improved wrap-around support, and a streamlined experience
- Access to social connection for community members and service representatives, helping people through the intense isolation being experienced. Community members had safe, caring contact with other people, feeling connected and supported. This created and increased levels of trust between community, services and the Mildura Rural City Council.

"... I decided to ring and enquire as we had hit a difficult time as both our wages had been cut in half. I rang and was connected with [the Community Relief Service] and right from the start I felt comfortable and welcomed.

Although they were unable to assist with rent as this wasn't part of their relief help, [the Community Relief Service] was able to help me and point me in the right direction and with all the information I needed to be able to seek help through another source which I have since done and have been able to apply for assistance which will be such a huge help.

I was also able to receive a care package of groceries that was so generous and brought me to tears ...

... So to say we feel truly cared for by our community in a time where we are all in a position out of our control would be an understatement. I have also had follow up calls to see how we are going and also had the warmth of an ear to listen with how I am feeling during this time. It's been really nice to have such caring phone conversation with the team member and have that contact with the outside world in a time of isolation.

We could not be more grateful for the assistance we have received from the Community Relief Service, from the food care package to the helping hand to point us in the right direction for extra assistance. So thank you Mildura Rural City Council for having these [services] available to all in need and especially for us who are not used to asking for help and being in this vulnerable position and having great staff that make us feel welcome."

COMMUNITY MEMBER EVALUATION REPORT P14-15

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The CERR is an example of a significant change to service delivery, with a new system developed rapidly to meet emergent needs, new partnerships between services to sustain it and changed resource flows. For example, during the peak 6 month period approximately 4.5 full time equivalent roles were redeployed by MRCC for food recovery, packing and delivery, community relief assessment and case management and coordination. This was flexed up and down for each response as required. In addition, approximately $35 000 was invested in food and other material resources such as pharmacy and personal hygiene items that were not covered by food parcels available locally.

Learning from this work resulted in identifying the need for a permanent, centralised food hub in the Mildura LGA. With the support of HUM and the other CERR collaborative partners, and based on the success of the emergency food relief response, SMECC was successful in securing a $650,000 grant to establish a regional food hub to continue to support emergency food relief in the region.

The Hands Up Mallee Backbone Team, and the broader collective, drew on existing trusted relationships to develop a new collaborative model of service delivery for vaccination outreach that reached into parts of community with low vaccination rates. In mid-September 2021, the Mildura LGA had the lowest first and second dose vaccination coverage of any LGA in the Loddon-Mallee Region (the entire North-west of Victoria), with first dose rates at 71% and second dose rates at 41%.[4]

Hands Up Mallee recognised the need for trusted local people to be working on the ground encouraging community members to get vaccinated, to set up clinics in places that reduced the need for transport, and to listen to the community about how to advertise and run the clinics in the most appropriate ways. As a result, the partnership delivered:

- 38 active outreach clinics predominantly in parks near areas with a high density of public housing and at the Ethnic Communities Council
- 1294 vaccinations to people experiencing significant barriers to receiving a vaccination, including undocumented migrants, families without transport and residents in public housing.

"The ones in the park, I think they were good and they were unique and they were driven by Aboriginal Elders basically telling us where we needed to go and when … It definitely reached people that we wouldn't have reached through the normal process, because at that stage there were the big mass-vaccination clinics … … but they were in locations that if you didn't have a car, they're going to be pretty hard to get to."
(INTERVIEWEE) EVALUATION REPORT

"If I go to another organisation, it's too hard … because no one helps to translate, … fill [in the] form or everything about COVID certificate. It's too hard, that's why I come here … it was really helpful to have someone to give that clear information in Thai language to help write everything down, to get all the forms in the right way."
COMMUNITY MEMBER INTERVIEWEE

The Active Outreach Vaccination and Testing intervention implemented to reach under vaccinated parts of the Mildura community recently won the Healthy Populations Category at the 2022 Victorian Public Healthcare Awards,[5] presented by Victoria's Chief Health Officer, Professor Brett Sutton.

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4   COVID Live Data, 13 September, 2021 https://covidlive.com.au/report/vaccinations-by-lga/vic
5   Award Winners & Finalists, Victorian Public Healthcare Awards, Department of Health, 17 October, 2022 https://www.health.vic.gov.au/recognition-and-awards/victorian-public-healthcare-award-winners-and-finalists

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CONCLUSIONS – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE THE BACKBONE TEAM?

CERR relied on Hands Up Mallee's expertise in designing place-based solutions and rapid iterative testing practices, which are vital in an emergency response, to monitor whether people are being reached quickly, effectively and compassionately.

HUM's local knowledge, existing relationships and networks ensured the rapid activation of a cross-sector approach and re-configuration of the service system to meet community needs in a time of emergency. To coordinate a collaborative local response, there needs to be someone, in this case the HUM Backbone Team, with the existing local knowledge, connections and partnership building skills to enable a response like the CERR.

To act quickly and build innovative service delivery models that meet the needs of community in times of emergency, existing trust and relationships are required. Hands Up Mallee played a key role in drawing on existing partners, and developing new ways of working to ensure everyone in community could access the COVID-19 vaccination.

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

TARGET 1:

Everyone enjoys long and healthy lives

TARGET 4:

Children thrive in their early years

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Logan Together (Logan, QLD)
EAGLEBY TOGETHER

ABOUT THIS STORY: COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY

This case study has been written by the Eagleby Together Steering Group. The story, information and outcomes of this work belong to community. It is a story of how more than eight organisations came together to redesign how to use approximately $2m to better meet the needs of community, and how as a result of building meaningful partnerships, real change has become possible.

THE SITUATION

The Eagleby community believes that Indigenous people can lead transformative change within a range of contexts including 'urban' areas. It begins with our concept of 'home'. This is related to an ancient Indigenous principle of connection enmeshed with this country: we are a part of it and it is a part of us – we and the living and non-human world are interrelated.

We are the world's oldest living culture and within our ways of doing and being are embedded principles that can and will continue to sustain us on this country. Our culture is still residing in every place. We carry within our community principles from the oldest lived stream of knowing about home and place. Our community feels the urgency to relight our concepts of home again in this urban area of Beenleigh, Eagleby, Logan and adjacent areas.

We seek to not only survive but thrive with respect and purposeful connection with each other and those around us.

The Eagleby community is therefore resourceful and resilient, underpinned by strong culture and deep community ties. But our diverse community has also experienced the compounding effects of widespread intergenerational challenge, much of which can be traced to inequity during the earliest years of life.

In Eagleby, more than 90% of the population experience the highest levels of disadvantage. Pregnant women are 6.8 times as likely to smoke as those from the least disadvantaged communities. Children are 5 times as likely to be living away from home as those from the least disadvantaged communities and are 1.6–2 times as likely to have health risk factors. Rates of children being completely immunised at ages 1, 2 and 5 are approximately 3% lower and children are 2.2 times as likely to be obese. Children are 6.5 times as likely to be vulnerable in their language/cognitive skills. We also know that children in Eagleby are more likely to have substantiated harm (1.3%) compared to those in Logan generally (0.6%) and Queensland (0.4%).[1]

THE INITIATIVE

We are Eagleby Together – a community-led movement that is committed to Eagleby's children, pre-birth to 8 years of age. Eagleby is the first focus community within the Logan Together initiative, and Eagleby Together has emerged in response to this opportunity.

We are working alongside Logan Together, which is a community movement committed to the wellbeing of every child in Logan and has the goal of seeing

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1   Child Health Queensland Population Health Dashboard 2018-19 financial year

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Logan's children happy and healthy for generations to come. To enable intergenerational change for Logan's children, both Eagleby Together and Logan Together are reimagining the early childhood development journey of Logan's children by putting community at the heart. This means building an actionable, evidence-based framework to affect the required systems change on the foundations of community voice and national research.

We have made a commitment to Eagleby's children, pre-birth to 8 years of age, and we are specifically focused on Eagleby's Aboriginal Children aged 0-5 years. Our efforts are underpinned by our principle 'First Nations First'. We believe that by addressing the needs of our Aboriginal children first, all other children and families will thrive.

The emerging Eagleby Together Steering Group is creating a more pronounced Collective Impact approach in Eagleby, developed in part from our existing rhythm of 'community doing within Eagleby' and the value adding impact of more recently empowered, community-led and infused Logan Together learnings and support.

Multiple stakeholders across Eagleby from primary schools to kindergartens, local sporting clubs, community groups, neighbourhood centres and police all voiced their passion to engage around the need of working together and appreciation of such a movement finally occurring. Already the messages are becoming clear and are influencing our pathway forward. As a fundamental way of being, we will continue to explore our community's vision and energies through our ongoing yarning and thinking deeply, or 'Kungullangi', as we call it here in our community. Based on the voice of community, we have created a community plan that makes clear where we are heading and how we can make sure our children and community are thriving.

THE WIDER CONTEXT

There is great hope being realised through our connection with Logan Together, based on a young but robust history.

In 2018, on the final evening of the inaugural National Change Fest event hosted by Logan Together, First Nations participants drew strength from each other and courageously called out the inequity inherent in both the conference and the approach to the work of social change on the ground. As Elders, we highlighted the effect of power which was playing out in a manifesto to be delivered at the end of the gathering. We challenged how things were unfolding and we stepped up to shape a new direction. The 'Change Fest Statement' was born. This Statement is increasingly held at the centre of the work we undertake in Logan Together. The path has not always been smooth, but our work continues.

There is also ongoing work with Logan First Nations Elders, Logan Together, Communities for Children and Queensland Government through Walking Together for Logan's Children. This work is focused on community-led efforts to understand and address the breadth and depth of risks threatening the safety of children growing up in Logan. This work is grounded in local context, diverse leadership, diverse cultures, and aspirations for Logan's children. It is anchored to local stories from families with lived experience of child protection. It aims to build high levels of respect and trust that are needed to achieve our aspirations together.

We are also empowered in our broader community advocacy for Eagleby. We are acting for Eagleby with the Logan City Council (LCC) in challenging the closure of our local public pool and advocating for changes to the LCC master planning strategy for social infrastructure to better support community-driven decision-making.

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THE IMPACT

And through this combination of culture, community and collective focus, we can see the system changing.

One morning in June 2022, community members from Eagleby Together and a small group of Logan Together partners came together on the wetlands. We sat together amongst the towering trees and dewy grass in an open sided marquee, a pelican circling above.

We had come together to discuss finalising a submission to government for several million dollars to meet a critical need in community.

The group that gathered was diverse, but well-equipped. The assets with which they arrived included a deep understanding of community voice, heard over time within Eagleby itself, and more recently through conversations held for the 1000 Voices initiative throughout Logan. Over years, the Eagleby community had already articulated a clear vision for their children and families. Behind the voices of community, the data and evidence had been gathered and shared. We were aware of what works in Eagleby, the 'ingredients' for real change. And from the voices, the evidence and the ingredients, together we had commenced the journey to build a 'core suite' to nurture and grow Logan's children through their early years of development.

In the end, the meeting went longer than the scheduled hour, but only slightly. Early on in the meeting, as the wordsmithing for the submission was about to commence, we paused and simply asked, 'Why do we need to wait?'

We set aside the ask of government and instead described what we wanted for the children of Eagleby. This included:

- Wrap-around health support in place which offered continuity of care
- A donga on the site of the organic community hub (Jinndi Mibunn), to support the journey through pregnancy and birth
- Health and allied health professionals in place
- The opportunity for early diagnosis at the early childhood centre and on school grounds
- A pop-up clinic on the wetlands
- Community Connectors providing seamless passage throughout the Early Childhood Development system.

We, as Eagleby residents, spoke of culture, flexibility and integration. We described how a connected, clear and holistic Early Childhood Development system contributed to safety and jobs, family support and housing.

At this meeting, solutions were identified within more than eight government, service sector, philanthropic organisations and community-controlled organisations. These solutions have the potential to redesign the use of significant levels of existing resourcing, possibly up to $2-3 million.

Therefore, the first steps of realising this vision of early childhood development in Eagleby had been fully funded through a reallocation of priorities by the Logan Together partners. The submission to government remained untouched. By the end of that evening, the commitment was documented in draft agreements for each of the partners.

Now, in September 2022, Jinndi Mibunn is preparing for the delivery of a donga to begin our bespoke health hub. New partnerships have been formed to extend the holistic model and, at the request of community, Queensland Government Regional Executive Directors have shared the indicators of their own policy priorities to be mapped, by community, against the Eagleby vision. This map will increasingly inform state government's work in the region.

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CONCLUSIONS – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE BACKBONE TEAM?

In Eagleby, we are community-led. For generations we have engaged in relational living, learning and understanding – yarning and thinking to deeply learn from and hopefully understand the patterns, views and insights of our people and Country. It is simply the way we do things in Eagleby.

However, the strengthening Collective Impact practice in Eagleby has been supported and enabled by the Logan Together Backbone Team. The Logan Together Backbone Team has been walking alongside Eagleby to harness the movement for change and identify opportunities to build capacity and leverage funding.

The Logan Together Backbone Team has supported us to build community readiness to take action. These efforts have provided the space and support for Eagleby Together to take our next steps in realising our community's vision of thriving children and families. The Logan Together team has funded Community Connectors and identified and enabled the allocation of funding for our full Backbone Team through Connected Beginnings. The ground-breaking work underway with regional government leaders to align priority indicators around our community vision will refine resourcing flows and streamline effort.

The system of wellbeing in Eagleby is changing. An informed and empowered community has taken the lead. And, across Logan, the ripples of change and self-determination have begun.

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

PRIORITY REFORM AREA 1:

Formal partnerships and shared decision-making

PRIORITY REFORM AREA 2:

Building the community-controlled sector

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Maranguka (Bourke, NSW)
TRANSFORMING HOW COMMUNITY WORKS TOGETHER TO REDUCE FAMILY VIOLENCE

6

THE SITUATION

Maranguka's primary aim is to 'grow Bourke kids up safe, smart and strong'. Maranguka will do whatever it can to keep a young person on country, and connected to community, culture, education and health, so they have every opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. Keeping a young person out of the juvenile detention system is critically important to this aim.

Before 2017 Bourke had the highest rate of 10-17 year old offending in NSW and the 18 – 25 year group was ranked the highest for a range of offences, including domestic and family violence.[1] Australian and international evidence reveals

- First Nations youth and youth in remote and low socio-economic areas are disproportionately represented in youth supervision[2]
- Exposure to family violence can have negative impacts on a range of developmental factors for children including mental and physical health, educational attainment, social engagement and wellbeing later in life.[3]

At this time, government agencies gathered for Complex Case Conference (CCC) meetings to discuss vulnerable and at-risk families. This did not involve input from Maranguka and relevant non-government agencies who were expected to execute the actions and outcomes discussed.

The Maranguka community's concerns included that information across various government agencies and service providers was not being shared and as a result services and support for youth were not culturally appropriate, not provided quickly enough, or at the right time. This was having a significant impact on youth education and safety outcomes. Maranguka had made numerous attempts to secure a seat at the table for these meetings, but requests were consistently declined.

In 2017 a serious incident occurred between a local business and numerous young people. The police had major concerns because actions taken by both parties meant there was potential for a Bourke business to be lost due to arson. Police reached out to Maranguka to seek guidance to prevent and de-escalate the situation. The Maranguka Backbone Team developed a plan within 24 hours, with guidance and advice from our Cultural authorities; the Bourke Tribal Council and the Men of Bourke. A conversation was then held with parents and carers and the young people involved. The situation was resolved, and the local business was able to remain open, without fear of retribution.

THE INITIATIVE

As a result of the successful approach to the 2017 incident, the Maranguka Daily Check-in meetings began. These are an acute response initiative that brings together government and non-government service providers to discuss options and wrap around support for vulnerable children and families. Meetings are held Monday to Friday at the Maranguka Community Hub and partners include the Department

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1   https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/ 2014 and police data 2014

2   "Although only 5.8% of young people aged 10–17 in Australia identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, almost half (49%) of the young people under supervision on an average day in 2020–21 were Indigenous Australians" https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-justice-in-australia-2020-21/contents/summary

3   https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/australias-children/contents/justice-and-safety/children-exposed-to-family-violence

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of Community & Justice (DCJ), Uniting's Family Referral Service Program (FRS), Birrang's Picking Up Pieces and Police. These meetings are an essential component of the Maranguka Integrated and Coordinated Support Model.[4]

In 2017, Maranguka partnered with the NSW Police to introduce Reported Incidents to the Daily Check-in meetings. Many of the incidents related to skipping school, children experiencing family violence, anti-social behaviours and 'child at risk' reports. The ability to provide support immediately, during the check-in meeting, meant young people received the help they needed as soon as possible after the event, which is crucial.

Each meeting has three main agenda items. First the Chairperson, Maranguka Backbone Team member, reviews and obtains an updated outcome from allocated actions from the previous meeting. Then the NSW Police raise reported Child at Risk and Family and Domestic Violence incidents that have occurred overnight. The Chairperson seeks out current supporting service provider(s) or refers to appropriate service providers to follow up. Thirdly the partners provide reports. This is an opportunity for attendees to share relevant information, raise other concerns, seek joint support. It also enables all attendees to collectively provide insight and guidance on how to best respond to current incidents and collectively support specific needs, barriers, and challenges.

This approach is enabling the community to assist Bourke's vulnerable youth by providing early support during hard times by addressing all the support domains, including education, justice, culture, health, family, peer support while providing positive pathways. Maranguka is leading local support services to do this in a joined-up way, through a collective impact approach.

> "… [police] have more ability to connect services to people who need them, rather than arresting people who have underlying issues."
>
> **2020 INSPECTOR ANDREW HURST EXPLAINING WHY THIS COLLABORATIVE APPROACH IS VALUABLE**

THE WIDER CONTEXT

No single organisation or actor can create the sorts of shifts that are required to create lasting changes in relation domestic and family violence. It requires commitment across and between all parts of the system and collaboration between all those involved - services, policy-makers and families themselves. It also requires leadership that recognises that collaboration across the community, beyond sectors and between organisations is the only way that change will happen and be sustained. Maranguka has played an important role in creating the conditions for such leadership in Bourke, as evidenced in the Sydney Policy Lab Case study of the Cross Sector Leadership Group (2021). This is particularly important as it demonstrates leadership and action by Aboriginal people of Bourke, under the guidance of the Bourke Tribal Council.

> "There are already successes including massive reductions in domestic violence, but it's also provided the glue for the community to come together."
>
> **NSW HEALTH MINISTER BRAD HAZZARD**

Maranguka has led the development of Collaboration Agreements which seek to formalise collaborative partnerships across services, agencies, organisations and people involved in reducing family and domestic violence in and around Bourke. Collaboration Agreements have been developed as part of the implementation of Maranguka's Growing Our Kids Up Safe Smart and Strong strategy with an objective

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4   The model was developed during a Maranguka 8-18 Year-Old Working Group in 2017/18 and was developed to align with the *Keeping our Kids Safe, Smart Strong strategy*, as developed by the Bourke Tribal Council. Regular result reporting is through the strategy's associated *Shared Outcomes and Indicators* framework.

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to reduce the risks of family violence and improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. Agreements have been drafted in accordance with the Maranguka Protocols and Guiding Principles and implementation is supported through the development of an evaluation framework, data platform, and shared evidence base.

The Bourke Collaboration Agreement aims to draw together the excellent work occurring in services and agencies across Bourke to:

- Enable a holistic and flexible approach to reducing family and domestic violence that focusses on better outcomes for clients
- Ensure families feel no judgement and have a supportive response, no matter where they engage with services and agencies
- Ensure families retain choice in engaging with service providers
- Develop a focus on shared outcomes and enable analysis of what's working and what's not
- Reduce duplication
- Improve reporting and progress tracking for all
- Better share resources.

THE IMPACT

Achievements to date, to which the daily check-in meetings have contributed include

- A 50% reduction in juveniles charged from January 2017 to June 2022[5]
- Increased engagement with culture, country and community for youth. For example, referrals through the check-in have been made to Save Our Sons/Sisters where connection to community, family, country through culture are taught and practiced through yarning circles, identity building, identifying and collecting materials to make their own aboriginal artifacts, painting, on country excursion, smoking ceremonies.

"I have resided in Bourke NSW for roughly 7 years now and over that time I have seen significant change in domestic violence in the area on a personal and a professional basis."
TACSI 2019 REPORT FOR MARANGUKA: DE-IDENTIFIED

"I'm glad that we (young people) can say what we want."
YOUNG PERSON FROM BOURKE

In addition, examples of services changing the way they work include:

Police commitment - Police have changed the operations and responsibilities of a Sergeant – Operations Supervisor, to focus attention on the Maranguka Daily Check-in Meeting, to work alongside Maranguka, to work towards building partnerships with services providers and community to solve some of the issues community faced. Police continue to dedicate staff to this initiative.

"That's been the big change within policing because traditionally with policing over the years it's been pretty much about response and charge but we have pretty much reinvented ourselves that we want to prevent it in the first place, and we want to disrupt it and response is our last option. These things are all built around the principles of prevention and disruption and we changed that from July 2016 when we commenced our operation."
TACSI 2019 REPORT FOR MARANGUKA: DE-IDENTIFIED

Department of Community & Justice (DCJ) and Uniting FRS coordination - Through discussions in the Daily check-in Meetings, a barrier came to the surface, requiring systems-change. Community members were

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5   Data collated via Seer from Maranguka Daily Check Ins.

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coming into the Hub asking for support and Maranguka would refer them to FRS where they learnt that if there was an open case plan with DCJ they were not eligible to receive support from FRS. We found that some of these community members would therefore not engage with DCJ. After numerous conversations around the best outcome for community, DCJ would then close cases, to give every opportunity for FRS to engage and support for early intervention and prevention of entering the care system.

Maranguka, Police and Hub Services minimising service-fatigue - The realisation soon set in that other services, outside of the Hub, were relevant and crucial to working collaboratively, and that their assistance could either prevent or minimise service-fatigue and duplication - community didn't have to tell their stories twice. To get other services involved in understanding the broader challenges of the factors that disadvantaged young people and families. Maranguka therefore extended an invitation to Department of Education, Catholic Care, Mission Australia and Department of Youth Justice. As the years went by other services were invited to attend. Now services work together to provide youth and families with more seamless support.

Community engagement and privacy - Community members asked to meet with Maranguka Executive Director regarding the Daily Check-in meeting as some were unhappy with the process, feeling their privacy and integrity may be at risk. However, through consultation, community soon understood the value of the meetings and agreed that a young person's safety and wellbeing was paramount. With community guidance, Maranguka spoke with police and it was agreed the only information mentioned at Daily Check-in Meetings would be reported incidents in accordance with relevant legislation, with each organisation agreeing to a confidentiality document.

Based on outcomes to date, it is believed that the ongoing initiative would result in:

- Continuing trends of year 12 completion rates
- Evolution of partnerships between government, service providers and community to contribute to a safer, healthier and more supported community
- Reduced youth offending and family violence offences.

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CONCLUSIONS – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE BACKBONE TEAM?

The Maranguka Backbone Team identified the need for community engagement with police, and consistently lobbied for participation in meetings. The Backbone chairs the Daily Check-Ins and plays a key role in identifying new partners to join.

No single organisation can create the shifts required for sustained changes in domestic and family violence. However, Maranguka has played an important role in creating the conditions for collaborative leadership in Bourke. Maranguka has led the development of Collaboration Agreements to formalise these partnerships across services, agencies, organisations and people involved in reducing family and domestic violence in and around Bourke.

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

TARGET 11:
Young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system

TARGET 13:
Families and households are safe

PRIORITY REFORM 1:
Formal partnerships and shared decision-making

PRIORITY REFORM 4:
Shared access to data and information at a regional level

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Burnie Works (Burnie, TAS)

DREAM BIG – EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

7

THE SITUATION

Burnie's history since colonisation has been intertwined with industry. The culture had been to seek an apprenticeship with industry at the end of year 10. However, as the economy has transitioned from large scale manufacturing to a range of employment opportunities founded in innovation and entrepreneurialism this culture has been difficult to shift in both employers and young people.

Burnie has faced entrenched disadvantage and generational welfare dependence, with poor educational outcomes and high unemployment, as evidenced by:

- Unemployment rates have consistently been above the national average, including high levels of youth and long-term unemployment. For example, in 2016 youth unemployment was 21% compared to 12.2% nationally

- Local businesses not being able to attract required skills. Between August 2020 to April 2021 41% of employers in the Burnie region reported difficulty in filling vacancies[1]

- High levels of youth not completing senior secondary school. In 2011 56% of year 12 students achieved their Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE).[2]

Anecdotal evidence is that there is also a lack of workforce aspirations and motivation for youth, disconnection of families in the community from business and educational entities and a need to strengthen resilience, creativity and interpersonal skills for a modern workforce.

The Burnie context, and community concern, is supported by international and national evidence:

- An estimated 9% of youth in Australia are not in employment, education or training. Research shows that this can negatively impact individuals physical and mental health and increase the potential of long-term unemployment, low income, employment insecurity and poor quality of work throughout an individuals' life[3]

- The economic impact is approximately $16 billion every year (1% of GDP) according to the OECD.[4] In addition to productivity gaps, this is due to the associated poor health outcomes, social disconnection and family disruption and poor wellbeing of children of unemployed people

- In May 2020, the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training living in the lowest socio-economic areas in Australia was more than double that of those in the highest[5]

- International research shows that educational attainment, vocational training and support for

1   *Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey (REOS) for August 2020 to April 2021 conducted by the National Skills Commission*
2   https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/about/data/attainment-profiles-direct-continuation-data/hellyer-college/
3   PwC (2018). The long term impact of being 'not in employment, education or training' on our young people. In Government Matters. https://www.pwc.com.au/government/government-matters/youth-unemployment.html and de Fontenay C, Lampe B, Nugent J & Jomini P 2020. Climbing the jobs ladder slower: young people in a weak labour market. Working paper. Canberra: Productivity Commission and Pech J, McNevin A & Nelms L 2009. Young people with poor labour force attachment: a survey of concepts, data and previous research. Canberra: Australian Fair Pay Commission. Both referenced at AIHW 2021
4   OECD (2016) Investing in Youth: Australia. https://www.oecd.org/australia/investing-in-youth-australia-9789264257498-en.htm
5   AIHW (2021). Australia's youth: engagement in education or employment. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/engagement-in-education-or-employment

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disadvantaged youth are shown to have the most impact on this cohort[6]

- A study by the University of Tasmania in 2015 indicated that more Tasmanians finish school at Year 10 and that fewer Tasmanians complete Year 12 or equivalent compared with the Australian average.

THE INITIATIVE

In 2014 Burnie community, business, industry, and education representatives recognised the need for connection between these groups to support young people with vocational pathways and develop a strong regional skills base to support emerging economic opportunities. The *Making Burnie 2020 – 2030 Community Plan*, captures this desire and draws from the community's aspirations in making Burnie a 'centre for information, knowledge and learning'.

The BIG Committee was formed in 2014 with the support of Burnie City Council and the early-stage Burnie Works, and "Better Futures, Local Solutions" (a Commonwealth Government program). Supported by the Backbone Team, BIG works to create and support quality experiences for young people and influence the way the education systems, industry and business intersect at key points in a student's journey. BIG aims to 1) enhance aspirations of young people early in their journey, 2) build strong connections and pathways for young people and 3) cultivate innovation and resilience in young people.[7]

The community plan is being brought to life by the committee's collaborative approach, with support from the Backbone Team. Educators, in collaboration with business, government and Burnie City Council

developed Dream Big in 2013. They responded to "Beyond Year 10" research undertaken by the University of Tasmania[8] that indicated students formed opinions about post Year 10 education well before secondary school. As a result of this, and consultations with school leaders across Burnie primary schools, the following three connected initiatives were designed and rolled out for Grade 5 students:

Higher education visits - Students are provided the opportunity to visit UTAS, Hellyer College and TasTAFE to familiarise themselves with the institutions, the purpose and approach. Between 2013 and 2020 nearly 2,200 students have visited the three facilities.

Job brainstormingvBIG Committee members hold sessions with students on future careers and what skills, capabilities or training would be required to achieve these. Since 2019 approximately 1,000 students have participated in these sessions.

Business visits - Students select a career they are interested in and are provided the opportunity to spend time with someone in that role. This enables children to understand the reality of the work and what skills or capabilities are required. In the period between 2013 and 2020, over 120 businesses have been involved in hosting visits to 750 students.

Teachers report that Dream BIG is an important opportunity for students whose parents did not continue beyond Year 10 or are not working or who for other reasons miss out on conversations in the home about what college was like or what happens at work.

Feedback from the students indicate that the visits made them reflect on their future aspirations, either by indicating a strong preference for or against the career based on what they learnt during the visit. They also linked what they learnt in maths, science, English, art or other subjects to their experience. They were able to refer to the pathways to gain the qualifications and skills they would need in the future.

6   PWC UK (2018) Youth Employment Index. https://www.pwc.co.uk/services/economics/insights/youth-employment-index.html
7   BIG Strategic Plan 2014-2030, p8.
8   Cranston, N., Allen, J. M., Watson, J., Hay, I., Beswick, K. (2012). Findings from a pilot study into student retention beyond year 10. Paper presented at the Joint *AARE APERA International Conference, Sydney.*

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All businesses involved in 2022 indicated interest in continuing to engage in the program. Of value is the potential to connect with future employees, share lessons and mistakes from their own journeys as well as key messages about their sector and capabilities and skills they require.

In addition, BIG and the Backbone Team bring speakers from different careers to talk to young students about their own experiences with education and career achievements. Speakers often have a connection with the local area and are aimed at supporting young people to imagine the possibilities. For example, Alison Watkins the CEO of Coca-Cola, and originally from the north-west coast, presented to students in 2019.

Other initiatives undertaken that contribute to cultivating innovation and resilience in young people include Dragons Den, Science & Engineering Awards and Job Expos.

The committee comprises representatives from local community, education and industry. Burnie Works Backbone Team supports and enables the BIG Committee by providing guidance and support on systems change and broader connections to parts of the education and employment system. Practical project management support is also provided to the Committee to implement the activities – connecting actors in the system, facilitating discussions, providing data and evidence to shape design, ensuring community voice is represented in discussions and undertaking monitoring and capturing learning. For example, the BBT recently facilitated an Industry Forum on behalf of the Hellyer Regional Collective, bringing business and school principals together to explore how secondary schools can be more responsive to industry needs.

THE WIDER CONTEXT

In 2020 the Tasmanian Education Act was amended to require young people under 18 to complete year 12, attain a Certificate III or participate in other education or training, or be employed for at least 35 hours per week. This policy shift had a significant impact on encouraging student retention and the work being supported by BIG and the Backbone Team.

It also catalysed broader changes in the education system in the region. Building on a collaborative and collective approach to youth pathways, the Hellyer Regional Collective was established which brings together all secondary school and colleges in the region.

BIG Begin the dream...
Imagine the possibilities...
Go for it!
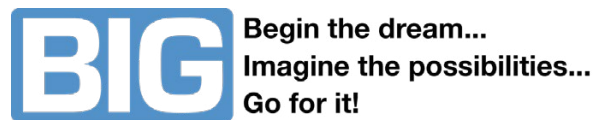
This means that students in rural and remote communities can undertake year 11 and 12 in their local high schools with the full support of Hellyer College. Schools are also offering specific post-secondary courses relevant to local industry needs.

Other significant changes in the context include a strong employment market due to global and national economic conditions, creating a strong demand for labour locally. It is recognised this in part contributes to the increase in employment figures outlined below.

Stronger Places, Stronger People

THE IMPACT

Since Dream Big started in 2015, the community has seen:

- TCE achievement rate increased at Hellyer Regional College from 56% in 2011 to 86% in 2020[9]
- Youth Allowance recipients in Burnie decreased from 252 to 142 over the period January 2021 – 2022[10]
- Around 3,200 children have been involved in the initiatives since 2014 – opening up possibilities at an early stage for youth
- Early engagement identified through Dream Big embedded in curriculum of participating primary and secondary schools, Hellyer College and UTAS. This signifies a shift in both practice and policy by educational actors in the system.

In addition, businesses are changing their practices around support to young people in training and employment, for example, by providing mentoring, support through apprenticeships, recognising the need for resilience and other life skills and providing for diversity in the workplace.

Based on outcomes to date, it is believed that the ongoing initiative would contribute to:

- Increased educational attainment outcomes in Burnie
- More appropriate pathways being developed for youth through continued collaboration between education and business representatives
- More local employment – contributing to a stronger local economy and community connections
- Increased average income locally
- Better health, wellbeing and social outcomes locally.

Burnie Works Backbone Team and the BIG Committee are working on developing measures of young peoples'

sense of wellbeing, and to track the longer term impact of these initiatives on the young people currently engaging with them.

CONCLUSIONS – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE BACKBONE TEAM?

"Much of this work would not have happened without the support of the Backbone Team. They have assisted the community by bringing different sectors and community members together, assisting in identifying key issues, co-designing solutions, assisting in the implementation of discrete activities and measuring outcomes."

DREAM BIG CHAIRMAN

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

TARGET 5:
Students achieve their full learning potential.

TARGET 6:
Students reach their full potential through further education pathways.

TARGET 7:
Youth are engaged in employment or education.

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9 https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/about/data/attainment-profiles-direct-continuation-data/hellyer-college/
10 https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/jobseeker-payment-and-youth-allowance-recipients-monthly-profile

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Hands Up Mallee (Mildura, VIC)
HOMEBASE HOOPS

8

Hands Up Mallee recognises the generosity of all partners and community members who share their time, words, insights and support to work collaboratively to create change. Their contribution is essential in our work. The stories and information shared and outcomes achieved in our journey together to create a connected community where families matter and children thrive, belong to them and the Northern Mallee.

THE SITUATION

In 2018 local youth told us they needed a safe and accessible place to connect with peers and community support outside of business hours. In response Hands Up Mallee, service partners and young people developed HomeBase Hoops (Hoops), a free Friday night basketball program for youth aged 10-17. Hoops provides local youth with a safe place to go at night, where they can share a meal, play sport and connect with their peers and community. Hoops is supported through the collaborative efforts of local youth service organisations and community volunteers.

Hoops is a powerful model of community-led action, enabling and nurturing collaboration across services and community members while facilitating relationship building between services and youth in a neutral, informal space. These relationships increase access to services and lay the solid and necessary foundations for long-term systems change in the region. Research consistently identifies that connections between peers and connections to trusted adults are powerful protective factors for young people.[1]

The Alcohol and Drug Foundation funds the initiative through the prevention focussed Local Drug Action Team (LDAT) funding stream. Sunraysia Community Health Services are the auspice and lead agency for the program, with partnership development and coordination, and evaluation support provided by the HUM Backbone.

The local youth participating in Hoops come from diverse backgrounds; approximately half of the young people attending are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Their attendance is significant in a community enriched by 8.95% of our youth population, 9 to 18 years (*ABS 2021*) having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, demonstrating that HomeBase Hoops is learning and practising vital cultural safety for an essential part of our community.

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1   *"Better Systems, Better Chances: A Review of Research and Practice for Prevention and Early Intervention"* ARACY, 2015
     https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/area?command=record&id=207

Photo: HomeBase Hoops participants in action. Courtesy of HUM Backbone Team.

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Local youth spoke out about the need for safe spaces away from home outside of business hours due to the challenges local young people and families face, such as:

- Family violence rates are more than twice the rate for Victoria, 1,569 in 2021 and 1,944 in 2022 (Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, 2022)

- During the past year, 167 young people 10 -17 years were directly impacted by family violence (Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, 2022)

- 14.96% of victims of crime were aged 0-24 years, meaning that young people in our community experience a significantly higher rate of crime than the broader population per capita (Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, 2022)[2]

- Local young people experience a higher rate of drug and alcohol use than other Victorian youth; 20% have used illicit drugs vs 12.5% in Victoria, and 70% have consumed alcohol, a rate 10% higher than Victorian averages[3]

- The region faces high rates of food insecurity; 6.7% of the local population running out of food and unable to afford to buy more in 2020, compared with 5.9% of other Victorians.[4]

These challenges have a systemic flow-on effect on the completion and continuation of education; 43% of the local population have only achieved education levels of Year 11 or below *(ABS 2021).* Affecting successful transitioning into employment, 7.3% of local young people require unemployment benefit support, compared to 2.7% of their Victorian peers *(PHIU 2016)*.

THE INITIATIVE

The Backbone Team worked closely with local youth to trial their idea for HomeBase Hoops. The Backbone's coordination and evaluation led to the program's expansion to four six-week tournaments a year. Youth input and collaborative involvement continue to grow, with some youth informally training to step into coordination roles in future tournament rounds.

Youth initially brought the ideas for HomeBase Hoops and HomeBase (an after-hours youth connection space supported by Hands Up Mallee and partners Sunraysia Community Health) to Project Y, a youth voice initiative of Hands Up Mallee. Hands Up Mallee worked with youth to develop the idea and connect their voice with relevant research and supporting data to begin the program. The Backbone team has since facilitated and coordinated the partnership between agencies using their existing resources, including staff and transport, to run HomeBase Hoops collaboratively. Additionally, Hands Up Mallee have provided ongoing evaluation support, enabling the program to adapt and expand to ensure it meets youth needs. The Backbone Team are currently developing ways for youth to expand their participation in community sports by working with partners to find solutions to supporting registration, purchase of uniforms and sporting supplies, and transport to join mainstream basketball teams.

There are 13 Collaborative Service Partners: Sunraysia Community Health Services, Victoria Police, Mallee Sports Assembly, Youth Justice, Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network, Mildura Rural City Council, Mallee Accommodation and Support Program, Mallee District Aboriginal Services, Christie Centre, Three for All, Chaffey Secondary College, Alcohol and Drug Foundation.

THE WIDER CONTEXT

During COVID-19 lockdowns, HomeBase Hoops faced multiple challenges that required tournaments to be shortened or postponed. The HUM Backbone realised it was critical during this challenging time to find ways to maintain a connection between local youth and services and provide support to youth, particularly during the long lock-down periods experienced in

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2   Crime Statistics Agency, Victoria (2022) https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/
3   Department of Education and Training, Victoria (2014)
4   Victorian Population Health Survey, 2022 https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/victorian-population-health-survey-2022

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Victoria. The HUM backbone secured funding to purchase activities, sports equipment and other items for youth during this time and worked with partners to contact young people who had been a part of HomeBase Hoops, check in with them and distribute items to their homes.

As COVID restrictions lessened and the tournaments could run again, the coordination and support needed from the Backbone Team increased. There were a few key areas that increased demand for HUM support: several partner organisations had fewer available staffing resources to share due to increased demand for services; and while restrictions eased, access to community volunteers was greatly lessened.

Partners and HUM continue to work together to rebuild volunteer and resource capacity for this in-demand youth space.

THE IMPACT

Research suggests that youth voice and empowerment are critical in developing successful solutions for youth needs. HomeBase Hoops was proposed by local youth as a way of working together to disrupt the high levels of disadvantage they and other local youth experience. We know 75% of participants rely on the transport provided by the collaborative partnership to attend HBH and get home safely at the end of each round. And over 70% of participants are from families with Health Care Cards.

Since 2019, HomeBase Hoops has run over 6 school terms (due to significant disruption during COVID lockdowns and restrictions). During this time over 200 young people have participated, many returning for multiple terms. The program receives over 75 registration applications each term, but only has capacity for 60 participants per term at present.

The shifts seen in Service Partners' thinking about local youth and their role in supporting them are reflective that HomeBase Hoops is showing early signs of disrupting disadvantage. In the short term, HomeBase Hoops ensures that young people have safe, healthy opportunities to connect with peers and build trust with adults in the community. As the ripples of HomeBase Hoops continue to grow, local service providers are actively discussing the potential for more widespread shifts, including opportunities to provide more accessible, out-of-hours programs for youth with a different focus, such as creative arts activities.

> "We all need to get to know the kids we want to use our services, HomeBase Hoops is such a good opportunity for us to do that, we love it."
> **ROD MARTIN – EXECUTIVE OFFICER NMLLEN**

Changes to local ways of working with youth have begun to shift because of the collaborative partnerships formed to deliver HomeBase Hoops. Early service partners have consistently engaged with HomeBase Hoops across tournaments, and new partners from diverse service areas in the region continue to join the collaboration. This is vital to HomeBase Hoops and the broader work of collective impact as it builds relationships and connects resources for better outcomes.

> "Before HomeBase Hoops, we haven't seen VicPol working so collaboratively with other agencies… it's got everyone together rather than silo building"
> **VICTORIAN POLICE OFFICER**

Photo: HomeBase Hoops participants in action. Courtesy of HUM Backbone Team.

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Several partners have further engaged with Hands Up Mallee to collaborate on emerging youth issues in the community. Other service partners who were initially resistant to the concept of HomeBase Hoops have, since being able to observe successful tournaments, now collaboratively partnered and shared existing resources to support the program. Hands Up Mallee have since worked with other local youth to plan actions for further youth-led and focused change in our community.

HUM is beginning to observe shifts in local service provider thinking and planning for youth focussed services. There has been a significant mindset shift amongst local service providers, with the realisation that out-of-hours work needs to be the norm for youth service provision, rather than an afterthought. Several partners have engaged with Hands Up Mallee to collaborate on emerging youth issues in the community.

The model prepares readiness for scaling up and out by investigating what other types of youth interests could be supported using this model and working to connect youth involved with Hoops in mainstream basketball teams and engaging a range of service providers to help provide the resources needed to participate. The project has also generated interest from nearby communities in Ouyen and Robinvale and has shared their learnings to support the concept of growing beyond the Mildura area. HUM is providing expertise and sharing learnings beyond Mildura for other communities to adapt to their youth.

Photo: HomeBase Hoops participants in action. Courtesy of HUM Backbone Team.

Stronger Places, Stronger People

CONCLUSIONS – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE THE BACKBONE TEAM?

Despite multiple attempts by different community groups and organisations, activities and support for youth have been sporadic and struggled to be viable in the long term. The Backbone Team played a critical role in drawing together and demonstrating:

- A community-led approach; working with youth to build an understanding of the challenges they face locally and to work in partnership with them in developing and gaining support for their ideas
- Relationship building with as well as between collaborative partners leading to greater coordination and more efficient sharing of resources (staff and assets).

The work of the Backbone team was vital in moving the youth's ideas into a successful program.

"I can't believe it is finally happening. I can't thank you enough for listening to me and being committed to this initiative of mine for youth… For me, sports was the only thing that I could count on each week to help me with everything."

CHLOE LOCAL YOUTH

The Backbone Team was responsive and agile. When partner capacity for support or ability to share resources has shifted, the Backbone Team have been critical in filling the gaps created and keeping the tournament running. However, this requires large amounts of supporting readiness in service partners, negotiating investment and staff involvement and out-of-hours work.

Previously, efforts to listen to local youth was undertaken using limited consultative methods rather than collaborative community-led efforts. Service delivery pressures in an isolated region meant that service organisations could not create and sustain youth-led initiatives alone. Services lack the staffing capacity and experience to undertake youth-led work in our community or sufficient time to engage and develop relationships without a collaborative structure to support them. This pressure previously resulted in limited consultation that didn't allow for youth-led development of place-based ideas that relate to what young people envision for the future.

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

TARGET 14:
People enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing

Photo: HomeBase Hoops participants in action. Courtesy of HUM Backbone Team.

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Far West Community Partnerships (Far West Region, SA)

THE SOBERING REALITY OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG DEPENDENCE IN THE FAR WEST REGION

9

THE SITUATION

Substance misuse, a serious problem that has been intrinsically linked to inter-generational grief, loss and trauma, has been a key focus of service provision and political attention in the Far West Region for a number of decades. A number of reports and plans, including a Coronial Inquest, created by a diverse range of stakeholders, have been developed to address this period. Yet over 30 years later, we are still grappling with the same questions and issues relating to substance misuse.[1] Research shows that alcohol misuse has adverse health, social and economic impacts for individuals and society, an impact that is felt across the region.[2]

In response to the Coronial *Sleeping Rough Inquest* 2011[3] the Ceduna Sobering Up Centre was set up as a resource for Ceduna and surrounding communities. The Sobering Up Unit is one of the key strategies designed to provide a harm minimisation approach to substance misuse. It does this by providing a safe space for intoxicated persons to 'sober up', whether by self-referral, referral from an agency or persons detained under SA Public Intoxication Act 1984. This aligns with the National Drug Strategy which recognises the complexity of drug and alcohol use and that people should be supported to reduce harm to themselves and the wider community.[4]

However, the communities surrounding Ceduna being dry meant a disproportionate percentage of clients

from those communities were using the Sobering Up Centre. In fact, one community made up 90% of clients.[5] The distance of the dry communities from Ceduna meant absolving them of their responsibility to deal with the issue. It also created an environment of disconnect from the people and services providing the support and the people that need access to the support.

When the local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) in Ceduna came to realise that the delivery of the service did not align with their core business it was decided to hand back the program with formal notification given to the government funding body. However, this presented the risk that the service wouldn't continue or would go back into a mainstream system, eg. a hospital. Moving the service to the mainstream would lose the adaptability and cultural safety framework of the service, including the majority percentage of Aboriginal staff employed at the service. Far West Community Partnerships (FWCP) identified that no one wanted this, including mainstream health services, and this path would not lead to a good outcome for anyone involved.

1   Grief, Shame and Pride: A study of the impact of family violence and the strengths of the Ceduna community to act against it, December, 2001, Cheers, B., Binell, M., Coleman, H., Gentle, I., Miller, G., Taylor, J., & Weetra, C.; Annual report by Wangka Wilurrara Regional Council (S. Aust.), 1994; Breaking the Cycle of Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Ceduna and Communities in the Far West Region of South Australia Final Report produced for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014, Report NR002 Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 1991
2   AIHW Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia (July 2022)
3   South Australian Coroners Court, *Sleeping Rough Inquest,* 2011, Inquest no. 16/2011
4   DoH 2017, UNODC 2008
5   Ceduna Sobering Up Unit 2021 Admissions data.

Stronger Places, Stronger People

THE INITIATIVE

A consultation with state government partners was co-ordinated by FWCP with the Far West Aboriginal Community Leaders Group (FWACLG) presenting the situation, service model and goals of the program.

The community making most use of the Sobering Up Centre was interested in activating their social responsibility to support their community members while away from community. FWCP drew on their partnerships within the state government to bring the opportunity to negotiate for the contract to discussions with the Community. Critical to leveraging this work was the existing relationship that FWCP had with the state government through the state and federal agreement to co-partner in the implementation of the Stronger Places Stronger People initiative in the Far West Region, which is housed within FWCP.

FWCP worked with the interested community to understand their capacity to take on the contract and where gaps existed such as clinical governance requirements for the program. FWCP facilitated intra-service and agency (funding) discussions to identify alternative opportunities to bridge these gaps, which included agreement by the funding agency to change some of the minimum requirements of the tender, through negotiation by FWCP and the funding agency. Advocacy back to the funders was a key piece of this work, providing two-way understanding and agreement on system change opportunities around organisational capacity. A focus was made on not setting the Community up to fail through setting unrealistic expectations and making sure any contractual requirements aligned with community capacity.

THE WIDER CONTEXT

Prior to this change although 90% of the Sobering Up Centre's clients were from a particular community this community had not been consulted about how to respond to the problem.

The impact of this work is significant in encouraging wider system change across SPSP communities. Seeing the process of one community supporting its people from 250 kilometres away demonstrates the possibility of operating and delivering a service remotely and effectively activating partnerships across communities.

THE IMPACT

The change of relationships between funder and service delivery has meant:

- There is regional and community oversight into what is happening in the substance misuse space through the provider being based in, and of, the community and the governance committee which allows for better service provision and coordination

- The opportunity to evolve the service to be more community-led and adaptive to community need. This occurs through the existing cultural governance structure in the community, whereby representation across community exists on the Community board who oversee the service. The board members have specific responsibility to survey and seek feedback from their part of community on matters relating to accountability and oversight

- Since December 2021, 90% of those using the service are now able to do so in a facility run by their own community, who understand their broader individual, family and community circumstances

- Government funding partners changed their accreditation and clinical governance minimum requirements in response to community need and capacity.

Stronger Places, Stronger People

This is a step in the direction to start returning people and responsibility to where it needs to be. The Community are now talking about what they can do within their community to support their people and to further consider what it means to support their transient population.

Feedback received from the service system within the region supports this approach:

> "The Community taking on the sobering up facility means that the community will be [in a] prime position to understand the extent and impact that alcohol misuse is having on their community whilst in Ceduna. It is a positive step, where we can begin to work with the community to create service linkages and design and develop additional supports to address this. It is important that communities are playing a key role in the provision of the services that their community members access, and this is a key example of the community taking control and delivering a vital service for their people."
>
> **DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CEDUNA, COUNCILLOR**

The change has helped the funding bodies to move to a model based on community need and capacity, not what an agency policy states. FWCP and the community who now manage the Sobering Up Centre changed accreditation requirements to match relevance of the context and changed the minimum requirement of capacity to allow for contracting in and partnerships with other agencies. This is evidence of how a funding body can change the way they operate to meet community need.

CONCLUSIONS – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE BACKBONE TEAM?

Without the involvement of FWCP, it is likely the service would have been transitioned back into the mainstream. FWCP has also created an environment within the Far West Region for local and wider systems change. FWCP mapped the need for sobering up units and existing capacity to deliver these services in different locations across the region, which identified the opportunity and potential solutions. FWCP leveraged existing relationships and partnerships to create new collaborative relationships and partnerships outside of FWCP but within the region.

Through this work, the Community was provided with a sense of assurance and adaptive support to act confidently in making decisions as they are not in isolation.

FWCP involvement and knowledge of Understanding, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning approaches has supported establishment of a local clinical governance oversight and community accountability process through the Community Board. Prior to this, there was no local measurement, local impact evaluation on clients or adapted learnings involving clients and the community of origin.

The transition of the service to the community has changed internal government policy, practice, procurement norms and created a new model of service delivery in partnership with government, community and the service system. The transformational outcome was adapting procurement and contractual processes to suit the needs and the aspirations of the community.

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

PRIORITY REFORM 2:
Building the Community Controlled sector

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Gladstone Region engaging in action Together (Gladstone, QLD)

DATA AND LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY ARE KEY TO LOCALLY-LED GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING

10

THE SITUATION

Gladstone is a naturally beautiful location with an enviable climate, abundant marine life, white sand beaches and stunning hinterlands, situated between the Southern Great Barrier Reef and the Boyne Valley. However, it is most famous for the global industry giants that make up its economic baseline and the Boom-and-Bust growth and retraction cycles related to the irregular but frequent construction of new industry projects.

In the period between 2011-2014, residential housing and rental prices skyrocketed in Gladstone as a result of the 'Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) Boom' which saw the simultaneous construction of 3 large-scale LNG facilities with a peak direct workforce of 11,000 and a significantly larger number of temporary workforce residing in the regional city for related employment .

As part of their conditions with the Queensland Government, LNG proponents were required to actively mitigate impacts of construction as part of their social impact management plans. Despite this, low-income residents, including young families and aged residents,

experienced financial stress and displacement as a result of an increasing cost of living.

Two contributing factors to these pressures were:

- Lag time for solutions (impact mitigations) to be implemented once approved, and
- Delays in agreeing the solutions to be delivered due to tensions between stakeholders, unable to collectively agree on what solutions would be most effective.

The cry of 'too little, too late' was commonly associated with construction impact mitigations and subsequently a view emerged that community were not valued sufficiently, despite significant investment and effort of multiple stakeholders.

Community narrative has continued to be 'we'll do better next time'. However, 2022 is seeing 'next time' fast approaching with the emergence of new industries being considered for the region.

In addition to the accommodation and affordability constraints experienced during the industry construction boom, the converse impact was experienced in the years following, through the 'bust'.

Photo: Gladstone LNG facilities. Courtesy of GRT Backbone Team.

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Gladstone Region engaging in action Together (Gladstone, QLD)
DATA AND LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY ARE KEY TO LOCALLY-LED GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING

10

During a four-year period from 2016 to 2019, Gladstone region human services reported increased demand and were crying out for more resources. For example, there were growing waitlists for family and child wellbeing services, including parenting supports and child assessments. The extensive waitlists resulted in client disengagement and escalation of client need. Service providers reported employee burnout and subsequent high turnover and reduced capacity to service the increased demand.

Declining community wellbeing reported by the service sector was reflected by community voice. Concerns were expressed through print media and social platforms, for the wellbeing of children in the community, and there were anecdotal reports of an increasing number of families experiencing hardship.

THE INITIATIVE

Gladstone was identified as a potential Stronger Places, Stronger People community in 2019 in response to this period of change. In 2021 a formal partnership was formed between the Commonwealth and Queensland Government's and the Gladstone Region community, under the local initiative name of Gladstone Region engaging in action Together (GRT).

In 2022, Gladstone has found itself in the early stages of the next era of growth for the Region. It is an attractive location for the Hydrogen industry and new green energy innovations and significant decarbonization projects for its existing industry base.

Regular regional network meetings of industry, commercial and government representatives, such as the Economic Development Practitioners Network (EDPN), have been dominated by discussions about the impact of this next wave of growth, and frustrations that lessons from the past may not be considered. These discussions continued to reach a standstill, because local players felt they did not have the *authority to play in this space.* The view was that those

with the power and authority to start the planning process for the next wave of growth management would eventually emerge.

GRT was able to leverage its unique position to take up a facilitation role in these conversations. The concept was floated that those at the EDPN table may be best informed to identify continuous improvements having experienced past growth challenges and that local information collated could be shared with the 'appropriate' authorities once they came knocking.

Local stakeholders noted that *inaction* was the most likely factor that would lead to history repeating itself. To avoid competing interests and delays, a shared agenda and strategy needed to be proactively agreed.

Under the community-led remit of improving wellbeing outcomes for the Gladstone community, GRT was able to:

- Leverage its independent position, free of any government and commercial agenda, to support stakeholders to collate local knowledge and experience to form a local position on effective growth mitigations
- Dedicate resources to further understand causal factors that aggravated the social impacts of the boom and bust cycle, and
- Facilitate stakeholders to develop a collective understanding of the underlying causes of the declining community wellbeing seen in previous growth cycles. This helped address community concerns and start co-design of possible solutions.

A working group was established of government, corporate and not-for-profit networks to progress the work.[1] Working Group members identified what local knowledge would be needed to inform the decisions of 'experts' as early preparation for the new wave of growth approaching. Participation was mixed - with both relief to move beyond talking to action, and hesitation to work beyond perceived authority levels.

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1   Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning; Gladstone Regional Council; Gladstone Industry Leadership Group; Gladstone Area Promotion and Development Limited; Gladstone Engineering Alliance; Gladstone Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Local Industry – Santos GLNG, NRG, Gladstone Ports Corporation.

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Gladstone Region engaging in action Together (Gladstone, QLD)
**DATA AND LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY ARE KEY TO
LOCALLY-LED GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

10

The GRT Backbone Team collated research of social impacts and mitigations during the previous boom to support understanding of what worked, what could be improved and explored causal factors of declining community wellbeing post boom.

THE IMPACT

Local stakeholders' hesitation has slowly made way for more intentional and determined work to support informed decisions about future growth, including to:

- Project the growth anticipated to allow for planning in low, medium and high scenarios
- Identify and understand existing planning works across various cross-sector stakeholders
- Review the impacts and mitigations of the past to identify what worked and what could be improved
- Identify current capacity and pressures to understand the context within which the impacts might play out differently to the past
- Use information collated, to develop locally designed solutions.

To ensure efforts are collective and aligned, further key stakeholders have been identified for regular updates and to reduce any risk of duplication or unnecessary tensions. The collaboration within the cross-sector group of stakeholders to understand the past and work together to design the future, are positive early indicators of behaviour change.

The Backbone Team's facilitation enabled local leadership to emerge at its own pace. The Backbone Team supported collation and analysis of evidence to quantify causal factors of the social change. As a result, the community was able to:

- Quantify the movement into the region of community members with pre-existing social service needs, to understand changes in social indicators
- Understand the changing demographic within the region which will help service providers to better tailor services to meet needs

- Validate the cause for the migration that created the demographic change, allowing for more informed community-led decisions and future growth planning.

Trust of community and interest in taking on local accountability is being built by the willingness of government to share data to enable community-led decision making. Both the Commonwealth (welfare and migration) and the Queensland (social trends) governments provided closed data which enabled deeper analysis of the causes of social change.

The trust and courage of government to work in a different way with communities and share data that has traditionally been challenging to access, has been a significant enabler for the Gladstone community to identify the questions that need to be considered by community to create the future they want.

Photo: Members of the Working Group. Image courtesy of GRT Backbone Team.

*Stronger Places,
Stronger People*

Gladstone Region engaging in action Together (Gladstone, QLD)
**DATA AND LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY ARE KEY TO
LOCALLY-LED GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

10

CONCLUSION – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE BACKBONE TEAM?

Gladstone Region engaging in action Together's role as an independent catalyst and convenor enabled discussion and built confidence in a community-led approach. It supported:

- Data collation and analysis, as well as sharing findings with community and stakeholders
- Community-led local planning and decision-making structures to emerge
- Practices and behaviours of collaboration and partnership
- Ensuring alignment between the Growth Management Planning Working Group and other related GRT facilitated community Working Groups including, housing supports, skills attraction and retention, integrated service system (cross-sector health, education, human services) and First Nations community

Without this intervention inaction may have continued and the risk of history repeating itself might be higher as Gladstone enters its next period of economic opportunity.

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

PRIORITY REFORM 4:

Shared access to data and information at a regional level

TARGET 9:

People can secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Hands Up Mallee (Mildura, VIC)
SECURING INFRASTRUCTURE THAT ENABLES FAMILIES TO THRIVE

11

THE SITUATION

Ranking fifth most disadvantaged Local Government Area (LGA) in Victoria[1] community members living in the Mildura LGA face a wide range of social disadvantages. As an outer regional community over 540 kilometres from Melbourne and 400 kilometres from Bendigo, the nearest major service centre, lack of easy access to some services compounds the disadvantage. There are also examples, such as childcare facilities, where the city of Mildura is well serviced, but the outlying satellite towns have very limited access. Hands Up Mallee has contributed to securing two major infrastructure projects in the Mildura LGA; a residential Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Withdrawal and Rehabilitation Facility and an Inter-generational Early Learning Centre.

THE CONTEXT: ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

Mildura recorded the second highest rate of care needed for opioid abuse in Victoria in 2016-2017, and has a rate of episodes of care twice that of Bendigo for alcohol[2]. The region also experiences the highest rate of family violence, where alcohol is a definite or possible factor[3]

There was no local access to residential withdrawal or rehabilitation facilities. Residents requiring residential care for AOD misuse face significant hurdles including considerable travel distance, costs, and isolation

from vital emotional support networks when seeking treatment. These factors significantly hinder treatment and long-term recovery. Without an accessible residential treatment facility within 400 kilometres, local parents seeking treatment for AOD use must face the difficult choice of leaving children behind while they recover, often over a period of months, or not seeking residential treatment.

THE CONTEXT: LONG DAY CARE IN MERBEIN

In 2019 the approximately 220 children in the 0-6 year age group living in the Merbein community were residing in a 'childcare desert'[4] with no access to a centre-based, extended-hours childcare facility. This childcare gap limited both parents' employment opportunities and children's early learning opportunities, affecting those who most benefit from access to quality early childhood education.

According to the ABS 2021, the median household income in Merbein is $678 less per week than the Victorian average, 41% of the population are not in the labour force, and 6.5% are unemployed.

1   ABS, 2016
2   Turning Point, 2018
3   As above
4   Childcare Deserts & Oases: How accessible is childcare in Australia?, Mitchell Institute, Victoria University, https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/early-learning/childcare-deserts-oases-how-accessible-is-childcare-in-australia

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THE INITIATIVES

Treatment and recovery from alcohol and drug misuse – a local residential AOD Withdrawal and Rehabilitation Facility

Hands Up Mallee took an active role in advocacy for a local residential AOD Withdrawal and Rehabilitation Facility, coordinating the campaigning for the infrastructure funding and the ongoing funding needed to run the facility. The Backbone Team worked collaboratively with partners from local services, local Members of Parliament, Victoria Police, Aboriginal Elders and the broader community. The group developed an advocacy strategy and created support resources, which contributed to securing funding for a business case from a local service club.

Childcare and early learning services – ideas sparked through an Intergenerational Music Program

After reviewing feedback from community and considering the demographics of our community, lots of children in younger age groups and lots of older adults, HUM's Mallee Community Voices group members identified the need to create a socially equitable inter-generational program. The aim was to benefit young children, their families and isolated aged care residents to overcome obstacles to joining early learning and family connection activities.

In response to the community-identified need, Hands Up Mallee and partners Sunraysia Arts and Learning, Sunraysia Community Health Services and Chaffey Aged Care began an intergenerational music and movement program to build connection, energy and joy for little people aged 0-5 years, their grown-ups and aged care residents. Generations Music Together (GMT) began in mid-2018, at Chaffey Aged Care in Merbein, a satellite town 15 minutes drive from Mildura.

Based on the benefits demonstrated by GMT, Chaffey Aged Care decided to create a sustained intergenerational connection by opening an Early Childhood Centre and co-locating it with the Aged Care facility. Generations Early Learning Centre opened in 2019 and has 72 places for children aged 0-6 years. Merbein is now home to one of Australia's first intergenerational Aged Care and Early Childcare Centres www.generationselc.com.au

THE IMPACT

The AOD advocacy work and Generations Music Together have resulted in two new, much-needed facilities that will support children in our community and their families to thrive well into the future.

The Victorian Government announced $36 million in funding for a 30-bed in-patient AOD withdrawal and rehabilitation facility for Mildura in the 2022/23 Budget. As a result, evidence suggests we are likely to see[5]

- Increased numbers of people accessing rehabilitation services due to reduced disruption to their life and the ability to maintain a connection to family and support networks while undergoing treatment, and
- Shifts such as reducing crime rates, family violence, intergenerational trauma and children being placed in out-of-home care.

These changes will have long-term secondary systems shifts for the families and children of people who can access local rehabilitation and recovery support.

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5   VCOSS, 2019 and Lee, 2018

Photo: Participants in Generations Music Together in Merbein. Courtesy of HUM Backbone Team.

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Inter-generational Aged-care and Long Day Care Facilities are new in Australia. However, the known likely benefits of this approach, as demonstrated elsewhere include:

- Opportunities for children to learn from and connect with an older people

- Improves young children's pro-social behaviours of helping, sharing and cooperating

- Gives older people a sense of purpose and improves their social outcomes.[6]

Furthermore, the facility has significantly increased access to early learning services for families in Merbein, which will contribute to stronger educational, health, income and social wellbeing outcomes for children later in life. Merbein has gone from being in a childcare desert to being well serviced with long day care availability.

THE WIDER CONTEXT

In both instances the Backbone Team played a key coordination role, bringing partners together, undertaking research, maintaining momentum over time, creating resources to support funding bids, demonstrating the impact of proposals on the community and drawing on their strong connections and partnerships to bring people together to innovate, and address obstacles.

For example, in relation to the AOD facility, the Backbone Team coordinated the advocacy group, facilitated meetings and maintained the momentum over many years amongst diverse partners. They also researched and mapped the relevant systems surrounding AOD use in the community, factors that influence recovery, and illuminated the flow-on systemic issues created by the lack of recovery, including detriments to family and child health, wellbeing and life outcomes.

"We needed someone to coordinate everything and pull all the players together. We were all doing 'our bit' – but we needed to do it in a more strategic way. Hands Up Mallee played that role."
PATSY DOOLAN, ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY MEMBER

The Generations Early Learning centre has also inspired a group of families from Red Cliffs, another satellite town in a childcare desert to work with Hands Up Mallee and begin advocacy for a childcare centre in their town. Red Cliffs has high levels of vulnerability[7] and social inequity.

CONCLUSIONS – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE BACKBONE TEAM?

Both programs relied heavily on the skills, knowledge and time invested by the Backbone Team. The intimate knowledge that Hands Up Mallee has of local data, the complex systems influencing life here, and contemporary research is a resource for the Mildura LGA.

While the need for a local Residential AOD Withdrawal and Rehabilitation facility had long been identified and requested by the community, advocacy efforts were not coordinated or strategic. Despite multiple small-scale efforts, there had not been any significant progress in gaining funding. Furthermore, no group or organisation was designated to undertake this work. Agencies are funded to deliver services, not to review population-level outcomes and collectively advocate, across multiple sectors, for the community's needs.

The Backbone Team played a critical role in drawing together and demonstrating:

- A systems approach - the Backbone Teams' experience in systems mapping and data analysis

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6   Care for Kids, "Intergenerational Care and how it benefits all Australians," 14 November, 2018 https://www.careforkids.com.au/child-care-articles/article/664/intergenerational-care-and-how-it-benefits-all-australians

7   Australian Early Development Census, https://www.aedc.gov.au/data

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was critical in creating credible and accurate supporting resources for successful advocacy

- Relationship building with, and between, collaborative partners leading to greater coordination and more cohesive campaigning. The Backbone Teams' existing relationships and experience in coordinating collaborative work enabled the partnership to work effectively and efficiently to identify opportunities and adapt the advocacy campaign accordingly over a sustained period.

The idea for Generations Early Learning Centre was a direct result of the work of the HUM collective demonstrating the value of intergenerational connection and the supportive relationship built with the CEO of Chaffey Aged Care. Without the Backbone's groundwork in mapping local systems, hearing community voice, connecting voice to current research, and their capacity to draw different partners together to start an innovative program (with no additional funding) the idea for this ground-breaking Early Learning Centre would not exist.

The Backbone was essential to this community-led change. The Backbone's iterative and relational approach to this work, combined with the awareness that Collective Impact is not about holding onto ownership, enabled intergenerational work to grow beyond the partnership.

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

TARGET 1:
Everyone enjoys long and healthy lives

TARGET 2:
Children are born healthy and strong

TARGET 3:
Children are engaged in high-quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years

TARGET 13:
Families and households are safe

TARGET 14:
People enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing

Photos: Participants in Generations Music Together in Merbein. Courtesy of HUM Backbone Team.

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Far West Community Partnerships (Far West Region)
DECISION MAKING FOR SOCIAL REINVESTMENT AND ALIGNMENT

12

COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY

The story, information and outcomes of this work belong to community and Far West Community Partnerships (FWCP) partners.

THE SITUATION

Far West Community Partnerships is committed to developing and advancing an Indigenous led, place-based change agenda focussing on social reinvestment and alignment, to reform the opportunities, infrastructure and services provided to communities within the Far West Region. FWCP seeks to disrupt disadvantage by reducing the reliance on welfare and addressing the causal factors that lead to entrenched poverty. This is achieved through the implementation of a collective impact approach to all our work, including both the Empowered Communities (EC)[1] and the Stronger Places, Stronger People (SPSP) initiatives.

The two initiatives co-exist seamlessly and are an example of strong placed-based social infrastructure (Empowered Communities) being implemented, with an innovative approach of using a collective impact methodology (SPSP) to enable the work within this structure. The Far West Region of South Australia is the only place in Australia where both EC and SPSP are present, providing evidence of the value add that SPSP can provide to existing social infrastructure.

EC focusses heavily on Joint Decision Making (JDM) in community governance and leadership structures to perpetuate Indigenous empowerment. In practice this means involvement in decision making on funding to align with community led Indigenous Reform. The EC Design report states that [we] *have begun the process of developing and organising improved governance arrangements that can meet the adaptive challenge of Indigenous Leadership… building a coalition of Indigenous reform leaders.*[2]

SPSP supports a systems wide approach, encouraging communities to look at opportunities more broadly and how these connect to other reforms to develop Shared Aspirations for Change. The Department of Social Services explains *a unique feature of collective impact is the shared commitment to a local strategy by communities, governments, service providers and investors, with shared accountability for planning, decision making and results*.[3]

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1   Empowered Communities is a Commonwealth funded initiative (National Indigenous Australians Agency) that supports Indigenous leaders to work with government and corporate Australia to reform how Indigenous policies and programs are designed and delivered.
2   Empowered Communities Design Report, 2015 Page 40 https://empoweredcommunities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/EC-Report.pdf
3   https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services/stronger-places-stronger-people

Stronger Places, Stronger People

Both initiatives are leaders in their area of focus, but there are some restrictions in how they relate to each other. For example, SPSP has limited scope to support Joint Decision Making, relative to the Empowered Communities "reform funnel"[4] (see below).
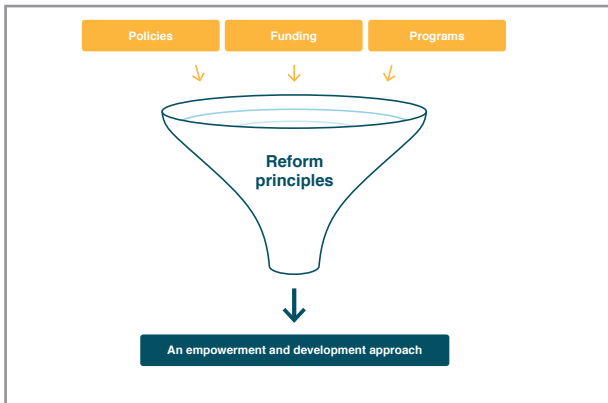
Whereas, EC has limited scope to apply a collective impact approach that enables grassroots movements for change, and use multiple layers of data, analysing qualitative, quantitative and meta data.

We have brought strong principles of Indigenous led governance and reform together with the principles of collective impact and grassroots community led strategic development. In doing so, the one Backbone can ensure the benefits of both can be amplified across the region to achieve the goal of social reinvestment and alignment. This case study specifically looks at how introducing the Collective Impact principles through the SPSP initiative to EC led joint decision making has provided greater outcomes for the Far west Region and contributed to wider systems change across government and the service sector.

THE INITIATIVE

FWCP identified early on that including the principles of Collective Impact and our collaborative engagement within our JDM framework, would increase the scope of both initiatives. In particular, it enables analysis of multiple layers of evidence and social impact, providing opportunities to influence government policies

and funding programs outside of established JDM partnerships.

A practical example of how this has occurred is where FWCP has used this collective approach to decision making to identify:

- Limitations of service scope due to funding guidelines and work with both funding body and service provider to re-design the funding and service approach
- Opportunities for service, and funding partnerships, avoiding duplication not just across organisations, but across government agencies; Facilitating greater collaboration across the service system.

FWCP recognises that decision making should be informed by an understanding of the broader context. The inclusion of the SPSP model allows for a helicopter view of the systems and services, adding value and additional dimensions to a decision making framework. This also adds an additional level of validation and legitimacy to the evidence base.

FWCP designed a framework that included basic decision making and probity principles, creating a scaffolding to integrate community data sets (the meta data) with government and statistical data (qualitative and quantitative). This has resulted in the use of comparative social impact data to inform decision making.

This evolution of Collective Impact and systemic based decision making, has continued to evolve over multiple rounds of decision making, each time adding an additional component of community governance to decisions.

THE WIDER CONTEXT

The reality of government funding arrangements into regions is that investment is identified through a top-down approach, which does not always reflect the needs of the community, or demonstrate best impact

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4   Empowered Communities Design Report, 2015 Page 42 https://empoweredcommunities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/EC-Report.pdf

Stronger Places, Stronger People

on the ground. There is a growing movement towards an empowerment based approach where communities partake in evidence based decision making, balancing need versus want, individual experience and impact versus subject matter expertise.

The movement calls for greater accountability of service providers to community as the persons receiving the services. This approach exists in a number of areas, including the 10 SPSP regions. The emerging point of difference in SPSP regions, and specifically in the Far West, is the realisation of social reinvestment and alignment. This is unique to SPSP as it requires the conditions of collective impact to be in place, and can provide a way of working within any existing social infrastructure.

THE IMPACT

Open dialogue with service providers on their accountability to community has been enabled by bringing together the experience of service providers, community representatives, and regional leadership, with service data, monitoring evaluation and learning indicators and community impact data. Discussions are also being had with community about their responsibilities towards engagement and participation in service delivery. For example, following a joint decision making round, a service provider received the recommendation that they need to increase their engagement with community and have since reached out to FWCP to partner with us on how they do that.

The broader support for, and engagement in, collectively developing a social reinvestment framework means there is a shared understanding of what partnerships can be developed amongst agencies doing similar work, bridging the gap of service delivery.

Decisions about investments and services are now informed by funding outputs and performance indicators, scope, intent, location and dollar amount. FWCP have aligned social service outcomes, accountability and long term planning to an agenda for change that is shared by individuals, communities and services. Our approach incorporates system wide investment mapping to not only consider investment

strategies against development priorities, but opportunities for broader system reform at a local level and beyond.

A welcome outcome of this work is the creation of partnerships across government departments and regions, where we have facilitated co-funding arrangements, shared responsibility for policy application and shared decision making for contracts that deliver across multiple regions. For example, FWCP, DSS, NIAA and the South Australian Government are collaborating to define how a partnership navigates different ways of government and community working together.

Participants in the JDM process within Far West have been supportive of the approach and the opportunities that it provides:

"The JDM process provides a helicopter view of what is happening with funding across services and across the region. Through the process we can see service duplication or potential for future partnerships, and this is important when developing a system-wide approach to supporting the community. The JDM process allows for decisions to be made locally, based on need and demand. This approach reflects what we have been working on in Ceduna for a number of years, where we take a holistic view of the region, and make decisions based on evidence and experience."

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED HEALTH ORGANISATION BOARD MEMBER, OCTOBER 2022

Stronger Places, Stronger People

CONCLUSIONS – WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE BACKBONE TEAM?

SPSP has enabled the FWCP Backbone Team to be the central point for information and data sharing relating to social reinvestment and alignment. We have developed and facilitated a process where local governance and leadership groups can make decisions from a sound evidence base.

Without the relationships across and knowledge of government agencies that FWCP brings, as well as the collective impact approach, the opportunity for a broader systems change approach to decision making about policy and funding design would not have happened.

The inclusion of decision making aligned to a shared community-led change agenda is unique to SPSP and is the critical factor in aligning funding and policy to community priorities.

CONTRIBUTION TO CLOSING THE GAP

PRIORITY REFORM 1:
Formal partnerships and shared decision making

PRIORITY REFORM 2:
Building the community-controlled sector

PRIORITY REFORM 3:
Transforming government organisations

PRIORITY REFORM 4:
Shared access to data and information at a regional level

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**Stronger Places,
Stronger People**