MACKAY REGIONAL

COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR CONSULTATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

COMMUNITY

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PREPARED ON BEHALF OF
Mackay Regional Council

BY
The Village Leaders

The Village Leaders was founded in 2021 and is a collaboration between three Mackay based consultants, Deb Rae, Dr Anne Butcher and Jennifer Emmett. We have a passion for community leadership, and over 75 years combined experience in the community sector.

We provide leadership coaching, personal development, professional mentoring, team development and upskilling. We also provide planning and management, community engagement and project management services.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the land. We pay respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and value the traditions, culture and aspirations of the First Peoples of this land.

Arial Image Shoal Point by: Jennifer Emmett

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03. GLOSSARY

AODS	Alcohol and Other Drugs Services
ASSI	Australian South Sea Islander
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
Community Development	Field of social welfare practice where community members come together to take collective action and develop solutions to shared problems
Connecting Up	Provides technology products, services, training, and resources to the not-for-profit sector
Council	Mackay Regional Council
DFV	Domestic and family violence
DVRS	Domestic Violence Resource Service
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
KMG	Kutta Mulla Gorinna Special Assistance School
LAMP	Local Area Multicultural Partnership program
Migrant Voice	Newsletter circulated by Council
QPS	Queensland Police Service
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
Remplan	Specialists in providing area-specific data

Image Old Bank Building, Victoria and Wood Street Mackay by : Jennifer Emme

04. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.1 Background

The Mackay region covers 7621 square kilometres and holds a population of nearly 118 000 people. This community, whose local government support is provided by Mackay Regional Council, includes approximately 20% of people aged up to 15 years and 13% over 65 years. Five percent of the community identify as Indigenous and Queensland's largest population of South Sea Islanders live in this region.

Mackay Regional Council's Community Programs team advocates for, supports and partners with not-for-profit organisations, community, sporting and other groups across the region. This support is underpinned by community development principles.

The Mackay region is currently experiencing a period of growth, which presents both economic opportunities as well as additional challenges for vulnerable residents. To ensure a healthy, connected, vibrant and inclusive community for all residents, Council wishes to develop a strategy as a framework to guide the work of the Community Programs Team.

4.2 Purpose

The intention of this work and subsequent report is to provide data (gathered through a community engagement process) from community service organisations and groups that can inform the development of the Community Programs Strategic Plan.

4.3 Methodology

The methodology utilised to realise this purpose was to:
- Obtain stakeholder input from nine cohorts from the community services sector through focus group discussions
- Review current literature relating to current community development practices, with consideration of impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and exploration of the use of communication technologies, online platforms and social media.

4.4 Literature Review

This review provided an insight into the waxing and waning of various governments' commitment towards community development initiatives and programs over the past 60 years, to what now appears to be a revival of interest in drawing upon participatory developmental approaches to working with communities.

The review also identified that opportunities currently exist for governments to adapt their community development approaches to take advantage of the escalation of technology use, social media and online platforms, to engage various cohorts and populations. However, to date, it seems some local government authorities and not for profit organisations have been reticent to fully embrace social media.

04. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.5 Data Analysis

This research involved collecting data from nine different cohorts about trends in their sector, as well as the needs and concerns they encounter. Since this data is quite specific to their sector and organisation, relatively few correlations can be found across all the cohorts in the overall data received. It would therefore be important for the Community Programs Team to consider the needs of each cohort individually and develop responses that specifically address them. This aligns with the structure of the Community Programs Team, where roles are identified to support each of these particular cohorts.

In brief, the nine focus groups identified the following key considerations, which encompass both Council as a whole and the Community Programs Team more specifically.

Advocate for improved internet, housing, more services and disability accessibility

Facilitate linkages that support migrants, services, artists and community members

Facilitate mentoring that builds capacity of local services, local artists, migrants and others

Facilitate partnerships that support artists and young people and create housing solutions

Support education of young people about Wi-fi use and participating in service governance

Provide grants or financial support to build capacity in ICT, leadership and training more Auslan interpreters

Grant applications to be easy to read and fully accessible

Infrastructure, facilities and other resources provision (cultural centre, community hotline)

Engage more with young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and migrants

Support ongoing awareness of DFV and culturally appropriate service provision

Increase promotion of library, migrant events, accessibility supports, sports tourism and Mackay as a safe place for young people

Host a housing forum, small events for migrants, youth initiatives and showcase of local artists

Use library as central hub and provider of activities that develop social and other skills

Public transport to have cashless payment, smaller buses and used more for major events

Council planning processes that encourage more housing options and facilities for people with a disability

Increase/improve information about MECC events, Council Reconciliation Plan and migrants

Social media to include descriptions of images and facilitate information sharing across the whole community

04. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.6 Information and Communications Technology

A desktop review was conducted on Connecting Up case studies published between 12 November 2019 and 20 September 2021. Connecting Up is a part of the Infoxchange Group www.connectingup.org and provides technology products, services, training, and resources to the not-for-profit sector, giving them power to fulfil their own mission. A brief overview of each case study identifies a range of applications that can assist services to provide community support.

This review also highlights the following opportunities for Council to support the local community sector to increase community impact through the use of online platforms:

- Provide information and education to the community sector about the Connecting Up Donations and Discounts Program
- Publish and promote digital learning opportunities for community service workers
- Coordinate local technology networking and educational events for community service workers
- Present emails and information with the reader in mind

04. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.7 Conclusion

The research was commissioned by Mackay Regional Council to better understand the needs of specific specialist groups within the Mackay regional community and draw on the findings to inform the Community Programs Team's Strategic Plan for the next five years.

Nine focus groups were consulted and overall, their needs were diverse and specific to their respective areas of expertise. However, some consistent themes were noted as the need for:
- More accommodation/housing availability and diversity to meet a range of people's needs
- A central point to easily access a broad range of community information
- Assistance with accessing more funding sources and grant application writing
- Support in attracting and retaining a range of specialist practitioners to the region

Additionally, every group acknowledged an increase in their usage of social media during the COVID-19 pandemic, to varying degrees. This could be seen as the new frontier for community development practice in the 21st century if the vision and support, including financial assistance to upgrade technological capabilities, are forthcoming from the leaders within Council.

The unique needs of some cohorts included:
- Financial stress for migrants on visas that do not allow for paid work or access to other benefits
- Mentoring to support ATSI and ASSI youth to participate in community group governance and roles within Council

Positive Council activities and initiatives were identified as:
- Mayor's taskforces for domestic and family violence and suicide prevention
- Positive working relationships in community policing domestic and family violence and disaster planning and recovery
- The range of services and community connection provided by libraries

In additions to these consultations, Council requested a review of literature relating to emerging issues and trends in contemporary community development work, which demonstrates their commitment to this knowledge and practice. The literature review highlighted the challenges and opportunities for local governments in being responsive to community needs (in an increasingly contested and politically divisive society with complex and competing demands) while remaining viable and sustainable as a Council. Case studies were provided which the Community Programs Team can use to stimulate discussion and new ideas about alternative ways of working with various cohorts within Council's footprint.

In a post COVID-19 world where the way in which governments, businesses and community service agencies conduct their work in new ways which have most likely change forever, the challenges are now more about how to harness new possibilities and opportunities to engage with others to make a difference for the better in the quality of life for all citizens.

5. INTRODUCTION

5.1 Background

The Mackay region's footprint extends for 7621 square kilometres, from Midge Point at its northern tip to Koumala in the south and west to Eungella, with a diverse mix of rural and urban communities.

Source: Mackay Regional Council Waste Services Performance Plan

As at June 2020, the region's population reached 117 902 and included:
- 20.67% of people aged 0 – 15
- 13.17% of people aged 65 years and over
- the largest population of Australian South Sea Islanders in Queensland
- 5.15% of people who identify as Indigenous (Remplan)

Mackay Regional Council's also referred to as Council in this report) history of supporting its community is well-recognised. This support is focused on ensuring Mackay region residents, whatever their age, cultural background, gender or life experiences, have opportunities to actively participate in their community.

Council's Community Programs Team maintains this support through its work with community members, service providers, local businesses and other levels of government. This includes advocating for, supporting and partnering with these organisations in their provision of services to community members.

The Community Programs Team is specifically responsible for:
- Community development of localities and sectors across the region
- Arts and cultural development
- Sarina Neighbourhood Centres
- Sarina Youth Centre and youth programming across the region
- Sport and recreation development
- Development and operations of three museum sites, Greenmount Homestead and associated collections
- Administration of grant programs available to the community sector

The Mackay region is currently experiencing a period of growth. While this creates economic opportunities, it can also result in barriers and challenges for vulnerable residents, which impacts on all community members, not-for-profit services and local businesses.

In light of these current regional circumstances, Council has recognised the value of developing a strategy as a framework to support and guide the work of the Community Programs Team. This strategy is intended to improve liveability in the community through healthy, connected, vibrant and inclusive outcomes.

5. INTRODUCTION

5.2 Intended Outcomes

The intention of this work and subsequent report is to provide data (gathered through a community engagement process) from community service organisations and groups that can inform the development of the Community Programs Strategic Plan. The data is to be provided to the Community Programs Team (through this report) for in-house development of their Strategic Plan. This plan will then guide the work of the Community Programs Team over the four year period from 2022 – 2026.

As such, the community engagement process is to be aligned with the Community Programs Team's five priority areas identified in its previous Strategic Plan:
- Access and inclusion
- Place
- Participation
- People
- Partnerships

The foresight of Mackay Regional Council and the Community Programs Team in commissioning this piece of work to inform their strategic planning must be acknowledged. This is not a standard approach for councils and demonstrates their alignment with a participatory community development practice at both a grassroots and strategic level.

After some renegotiation, Council's specifications for this project were to:
1. Undertake a variety of engagement activities that seek to determine the current issues of concern for the community services sector and identifies where Council should: Advocate, Lead or Partner in these issues.
2. Undertake desktop research of current trend as they relate to the provision of community services, particularly the way in which online platforms are/can be utilised and how they inform future community development practice.

06. METHODOLOGY

Based on the specified outcomes for this work, the methodology utilised was to:
- Obtain stakeholder input from nine cohorts from the community services sector through focus group discussions
- Review of current literature relating to current community development practices, with consideration of any changes or innovations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Where possible, this review has focused on research in regional contexts and also explores the use of communication technologies, online platforms and social media.

6.1 Stakeholder Input

Stakeholder input included quantitative data which was collected via focus groups sessions which targeted key community sectors relevant to the Community Programs Team. These nine focus areas were:
1. Arts and culture
2. Community safety
3. Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
4. Disability
5. Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islanders and Australian South Sea Islanders
6. Housing
7. Mental Health and Wellbeing
8. Sport and Recreation
9. Youth

Participants were identified through:
- Direct invitation from Community Programs Team to organisations they have previously interacted with
- Targeted distribution of flyers through community service networks

The focus group sessions were organised to be conducted online via Zoom so that:
- Barriers of lack of time and transport were averted for participants
- Participants had the opportunity to respond honestly, without concern about judgement or other consequences from voicing their opinion
- Perceptions of power or status between participants were minimised

One focus group (CALD) was converted to a face-to-face session due to unexpected disruptions to internet connection.

The Neighbourhood Hub supported people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities to participate in the CALD focus group.

06. METHODOLOGY

The questions asked in each focus group were simple and straightforward, to encourage participants to share their perspective:

1. Considering your field of expertise and the area/s in which you work, what are the emerging issues/trends?
2. What are the current challenges facing your sector/ organisation?
3. What could Council do to support your sector/organisation?
4. How has your community/organisation adapted to, or integrated virtual media and platforms into your work? What have been the challenges, what have been the successes?

These core questions were followed up with further questions to clarify responses.
By the close of the research period, data was collected from participants as detailed in the table 1: Participants on the next page.
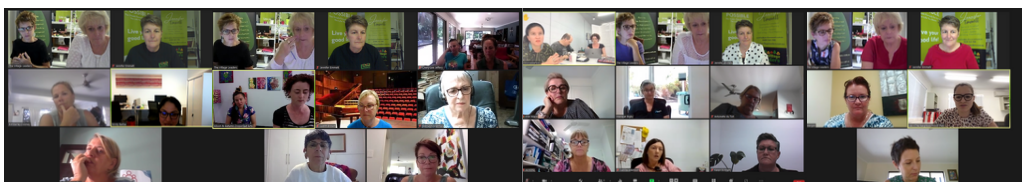
6.2 Limitations

A range of strategies were employed to identify participants, including email, flyers through networks, directly approaching key stakeholders in each cohort and requesting that others in influential positions encourage participation by potential stakeholders. However, this produced mixed results, with some focus groups having very low participation rates or participation by more than one person from the same organisation. Time and other resource restrictions prohibited taking further action to increase participation rates or depth.

With respect to the literature review undertaken for this report, it is important to note that it does not include commentary on all nine of the focus group areas included in the consultation process. This is due to the lack of research data available in relation to this range of cohorts, within a community development context. In lieu of this gap in current research, some case studies are provided in the literature review relating to three different contexts. These are intended to provide examples of how a community development approach can be applied in different contexts.

In any research, it is important to identify the inherent bias of the researchers. In this project, the researchers live and work in the community in which the research was conducted. The community services sector in the Mackay region is also relatively small. As a result, the researchers are known to, or have previously worked with, many of the focus group attendees and already had a basic knowledge of their organisations' service structure, range of service provision, client base, staffing and other resources.

06. METHODOLOGY

TABLE 1: PARTICIPANTS

Focus Group	Number of Participants	Organisation/Group
Arts and culture	8	Crossroad Arts, CQU Conservatorium of Music, Arts Practitioners
Community safety	5	DVRS, Neighbourhood Hub, QPS, Greater Whitsunday Communities, Mackay Regional Councillor
CALD	9	Neighbourhood Centre, Migrant women, TAFE
Disability	9	Engedi, Greater Whitsunday Communities, Crossroad Arts, Mackay Advocacy, MADEC, Mackay Regional Councillor
Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian South Sea	5	Greater Whitsunday Communities, APM – My Aged Care Contractor, Marabisda/KMG/My 105/Hospital Health Services Board, Mackay Regional Councillor
Housing	7	Life Without Barriers, QShelter, CASA, Greater Whitsunday Communities, MADEC, St Vincent de Paul Homeless Men's Hostel
Mental health	5	Greater Whitsunday Communities, AODS, Minds Aligned, Run for MI Life, Grapevine, QShelter, Mackay Regional Councillor
Sport and Recreation	1	Pioneer Tennis
Youth	3	Life Without Barriers, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Partnerships, Greater Whitsunday Communities

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

NEW AND EMERGING TRENDS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

Introduction

This literature review has been commissioned by the Mackay Regional Council to identify new and emerging trends in the field of community development practice, to inform the work undertaken by the Community Services team within Council. In undertaking this review the origins and definitions of community development practice within a global context are presented, followed by an overview of various Australian government's initial embrace of, then subsequent distancing from, and now resurgence towards, community development practice, over decades.

This review will explore where we now find ourselves, particularly in a world which is two years into the grip of a COVID-19 pandemic. This has significantly impacted the lives of individuals, communities and countries globally, thereby forcing every conceivable industry to adapt quickly to maintain some level of continuity in their work, in a range of different ways, to survive. It has also brought about an escalation in the use of technology and social media, the likes of which has never before been experienced in any workplace. Information will be presented about this developing frontier and how it might be further harnessed and utilised within the field of community development into the future. Within the current global context, it is timely to consider how these evolutionary changes are impacting upon individuals and communities in Australia while also drawing upon international learnings, through the lens of community development practice.

The purpose of this literature review is to explore current and emerging trends within the field of social welfare practice in Australia, while drawing on important and relevant learnings and case studies from national and international practice in this field.

Presented below are innovative examples from research literature relating to various cohorts within regional and rural Australian communities and how community development initiatives have been engaged, particularly via the arts, to bring about positive outcomes for individuals and broader communities. Relevant national and international case studies are presented relating to youth initiatives, inclusion of the aged and aging populations and an Indigenous Central Australian community where positive and empowering outcomes have been achieved for the First Nations people involved.

> **"This has significantly impacted the lives of individuals, communities and countries globally, thereby forcing every conceivable industry to adapt quickly to maintain some level of continuity in their work, in a range of different ways, to survive"**

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

Community Development

Emerging in the UK in the late 1950s and early 1960's (Infed.org, undated), community development as a field of social welfare practice has, as its core, the empowerment of individuals and communities through consciousness raising (Friere, 1972) of shared individual problems or concerns so that, collectively, these concerns can be addressed through political actions. The United Nations defines community development as "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems" (UN, 2014). The International Association for Community Development (ICAD) also provides a more detailed definition of community development. It states "(c)ommunity development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings" (ICAD, 2020).

In Australia, community development, as a form of practice became prominent in the late 1960's and early 1970's when some local governments established community development programs (Hornby, 2012) and some community based, not for profit, organisations began to receive state government funding to employ community workers. In 1974, selected communities in Australia took advantage of federally funded pilot grants made available under the Whitlam Labor Government. This initiative was known as the Australian Assistance Plan (AAP) (Australia. Social Welfare Commission. Interim Committee,1973).

While other state and local governments may have initiated their own community development programs and employed community development workers, this was the first time a federal government had initiated a program to establish Regional Social Development Councils in various locations throughout Australia, focusing on the social development of communities at the local level (Australia. Social Welfare Commission. Interim Committee,1973).

In the ensuing years since the inception of the AAP, all but one of the initially established services has ceased to operate, leaving the only remaining service located in Mackay, Queensland, operating continuously since its inception in 1974. It has been rebranded over the years and is now known as Greater Whitsunday Communities, a testament to the tenacity and commitment to the implementation of social justice principles, community development and regional community engagement within Mackay and surrounding regional communities by all who have been involved in this organisation over past decades (Greater Whitsunday Communities, website, undated).

As governments have changed over time, community development initiatives have also fallen victim to changing government priorities and funding cuts to the social services more broadly in Australia and overseas (Ife, 1996; Popple, 2015; Infed.org, undated; Kelly and Westoby, 2018). Many local governments, to their credit have continued to fund and implement community development programs to the overall benefit of their communities (Hornby, 2012; Vadeveloo and Singaravelloo, 2013).

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Changing Environment

The world has changed significantly over recent decades which brings with it many challenges and opportunities. These are due in large part to these factors:

- the global financial crisis (Australian Government, 2009; Kuecker, Mulligan, Nadarajah, 2011)
- the devastating impacts of the COVID19 pandemic experienced by populations and communities worldwide (World Health Organization, 2020; Lynch et al., 2021; Westoby and Harris 2020)
- the rapid escalation in use of technologies and social media (Matthews, 2016; Marlow and Chubb, 2021; McCabe and Harris, 2021)
- environmental climate change and global warming, placing extreme pressures on the planet and populations (Australian Academy of Science, 2015)
- local government's ability to respond to climate change through governance (Meiklejohn, et al., 2021; Ford, Lynch and Lathouras, 2021)
- the rise of popularist neoliberal governments propagating divisive political discourse, creating disruption in the lives of many people and communities around the world (Kenny, Ife, Westoby, 2021; Lynch, Lathouras, Forde, 2021; De Witte, 2020; Grzymala-Busse, Kuo, Fukuyama, McFaul, 2020).

In this current context there appears to be more reflection on, and questioning of, community development and engagement at the local government level (Kaur and Lodhia, 2019; Christensen and McQuestin, 2019; Meiklejohn, Maloney and Bekessy, 2021). Although there is not a large body of literature to draw upon in this regard, there are some insightful contributions which are helpful to consider the current pressing challenges within local government in relation to community development practice.

The world has changed significantly over recent decades which brings with it many challenges and opportunities.

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The Changing Environment

Christensen and McQuestin (2019) provide insights into the strategic implications of present community engagement practices of local councils. They identified that the profiling and resourcing of community work across councils varies, with "a significant coupling of council's community engagement function with its communications, media, and public relations functions" and have called for a re-think of the ways in which local government authorities engage with their communities (Christensen and McQuestin, 2019:473). Findings from their research into the strategic implications of community engagement indicate divergent directions are being taken by councils. These "depend not only on the jurisdictional legislative requirements but also on individual councils and their understanding of the role of community engagement, their leadership in this area and, undoubtedly the resources they have available" (Christensen and McQuestin, 2019: 473).

Kaur and Lodhia (2019:164) acknowledge the "most urgent challenges which organisations, including local governments, are facing is to operate within an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable manner". Meiklejohn et al. (2021) call for a rethinking of local government community development and engagement practices through a climate change lens. They suggest that current local government practices to engage with the community regarding the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is based on a behaviour change premise, with limited success. Drawing upon the earlier works of Spurling, McMeekin, Shove, Southerton and Welch (2013), Meiklejohn et al. (2021) recommend the 're-conceptualisation, re-crafting, re-integration and substitution of existing community engagement practices' to consider how climate change community engagement practice theory might be incorporated to improve effectiveness.

"most urgent challenges which organisations, including local governments, are facing is to operate within an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable manner".

Kaur and Lodhia (2019:164)

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and Technology

The rise in the use of and access to technology via a plethora of devices such as smart phones, tablets and computers has enabled people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds to access information as never before in human history. As at June 2021, it was "estimated 31.01 million mobile phone accounts were active in Australia" (SBS News 2021; Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2020). This is more than the total population of Australia, indicating significantly high usage of technology within this country.

While this level of technology saturation brings with it many advantages in terms of rapid transfer of communications and information dissemination, such as seen in Australia during bushfires, cyclones, floods, and the COVID19 pandemic etc, it also has disadvantages for community development practice. The use of social media has contributed significantly to the changing nature of collective and political action, often through the rapid spread of information and misinformation, creating a new typology of political involvement and activism (Coleman, Morrison, and Svennevig, 2008; Bakrdjieva, 2009; Milan, 2015; Ledwith, 2016; McCabe and Harris, 2021).

McCabe and Harris (2021) undertook an extensive literature search on the topic of social media and community development and have identified three key beneficial areas for the use of social media, as follows:
- "democratization of voice, in facilitating media access for alternative and minority interests;
- the relative ease with which it is possible to connect with like-minded others;
- the potential to make collaboration more effective at local, national and international levels"
- (Harris and McCabe, 2021:319)

They go on to assert that despite these apparent advantages of the introduction of new technologies, "the community development field largely has failed to engage with the implications of the technological innovations" (McCabe and Harris, 2021:319). They argue there are lost opportunities to harness the use of social media in regards to community organisation and collective community development practice (McCabe and Harris, 2021). There is an apparent reluctance by many not-for-profit organisations and other community-based organisations to fully engage with current technological and social media advances and platforms (McCabe and Harris, 2021; Godinho, Borda, Kariotis, Molnar, Kostkova, and Liaw, 2021).

The rise in the use of and access to technology via a plethora of devices such as smart phones, tablets and computers has enabled people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds to access information as never before in human history.

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and Technology

Bakardjieva (2009) also theorises on the use of social media to develop sub-cultures and activism which has become borne out in the many mobilisations of activism recently witnessed in the US and in Australia, in relation to personal freedoms and COVID-19 anti-vaccinations. Furthermore, McCabe and Harris (2021:325) suggest Bakardjieva's (2009) "delineation of sub-activism helps to explain the widely expressed sense of individual empowerment in relation to political and civic issues". This has become more apparent in the individualised, emboldened, often abrasive posts which are examples of politically engaged commentary made on some social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin etc. In doing so, Wells (2014) comments on the sense of detachment and identifies the limitations of social media, which sees social movements faltering at the opportunity to take power. This is due to a lack of an ongoing coordinated collective approach to social issues, which otherwise may have been achieved through more structured community development practices (Bennett and Segerberg, 2011; 2012).

McCosker's (2015) analysis is "that online networked individuals now carry out community action roles – such as awareness raising, stimulating and coordination reactions, feeding traditional media, and provoking policy – more and more efficiently, than organizations" (in McCabe and Harris, 2021:326). An alternative perspective provided by Halupka (2016) posits the two approaches can be complimentary, rather than conflicting with each other. Westoby and Harris (2020: 553) argue for the need to employ "transformational critical digital literacy work that enables greater community awareness of the consequences of digital lives and also transformative praxis" but they caution about the extent of personal information being harvested by large corporations, which Zuboff (2019) terms Surveillance Capitalism.

The element of risk in use of social media is also included within research undertaken by Sharif, Troshani, and Davidson (2018) where, after surveying 173 local government organisations in Australia, they developed a model for assessing social media impact in local government. The model focuses on assessing three key areas to determine impact of social media in its operations (1) the environment in which local governments operate, taking into account – community demand and faddishness of the times, (2) the technology – perceived benefits, perceived security risks and compatibility, and (3) the organisation – the degree of formalisation of use of social media and top management drive to allocate funds to implement and use social media (Sharif et al. 2018).

All of these foci are key considerations for contemporary community development practice given the pervasiveness of the use of the internet and social media in society.

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemporary Community Development Practice

Many local governments have maintained community development programs over several decades to current times. However, in recent years in Australia, there appears to be a renewed focus on community development approaches, where governments at both the state and federal levels work with and within urban, rural and regional communities. Albeit, these community development approaches may be more 'top down' than 'bottom up'. This is not surprising given the managerialist neoliberal focus of many western democracies which need to see short term 'outcomes' for investment within a political voting cycle, usually three or four years. This is however, an antithetical perspective to longer term participatory community development practices of earlier times, where short term outcomes are much less tangible but more evident longitudinally, in terms of community cohesion, collectivism, participation, community wellbeing and empowerment. At the time of writing, the federal government has allocated $15 million for Community Development Grant Programs (Australian Government, Dept of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, 2021). The Queensland State Government also has a range of funding offered for community support programs, some of which may use community development approaches, while others are service delivery focused. These programs are predominantly administered through not-for-profit organisations and/or local governments e.g., Natural Disaster Resilience Programs, Family Support, and Sector Support funded programs (Queensland Government, 2021).

There are many examples in the literature drawing on contemporary trends in community development practice, when working with a range of cohorts in urban, rural and regional communities e.g. working with youth (Skippington and Davis, 2016; Spiegel and Parent, 2018), the arts and cultural sector (Purcell, 2009; Rimmer, 2020), Indigenous communities (Campbell and Hunt, 2013), women (Vincent, 2020; Rimmer, 2021), community development and sport (Sabbe, Bradt, Spaaij, and Roose, 2020), the role of social capital in community development organisations (Williams, McCall, Berner and Brown-Graham, 2021) and rural and remote communities in Australia (Downey and Trelkeld, 2021).

The following are positive case examples of community development practice undertaken across various cohorts and geographical locations. They draw upon the literature while providing useful insights to inform future community engagement and developmental practice.

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

Community and Youth

Within the literature relating to the arts and community development, there are good examples of where marginalised, disadvantaged, disenfranchised and disconnected youth, in particular, have been engaged in the arts to create a sense of belonging and connectedness. Through this approach, relationships can be formed and positive influences can reshape their futures to becoming engaged and contributing citizens in society (see Skippington and Davis, 2016; Spiegel and Parent, 2018). Skippington and Davis (2016) focus on the inclusion of young people in arts programs to engage them in rural and remote communities. The intention is that their participation in arts and cultural activities may provide them with interests and skills development they may otherwise have not considered. It is also to encourage retention and prevent the drift of young people away from rural areas to larger urban and metropolitan areas.

Similarly, through the research they conducted with participants in western Queensland communities, they identified the potential for a broader range of people of all ages to become either directly or indirectly involved in the arts within their respective communities (Skippington and Davis, 2016). They noted the potential for rural and remote communities, through the creation of arts events or initiatives, to become a drawcard for tourism, thereby increasing economic stimulation in communities where tourists may otherwise have passed them by. They identified in a couple of small communities that some business owners have come to realise the financial value to them of increased trade from these types of tourism arts events, so they willingly contributed small amounts of funds to the arts sector to further stimulate development of arts and festivals (Skippington and Davis, 2016). They argue the benefits of arts to rural and regional communities can be significant where the arts are 'valued' and invested in. However, they conclude their research findings by emphasising "the important role for the arts and artists in working with communities to generate new ideas and visions for the future yet also indicate this is a resource currently under-used in remote rural communities" (Skippington and Davis, 2016:237). Their research also highlighted there was "little or no appreciation in remote/rural communities of the potential to use the arts to generate and/or support economic outcomes" Skippington and Davis (2016:237). Whereas, conversely, there are several examples in contemporary literature (Cunningham, 2006; MacDonald and Jolliffe, 2003; Pratt, 2009) which identify significant potential for the arts in economic development (Skippington and Davis, 2016:237).

Spiegel and Parent (2018) present a case study focusing on the inclusion of marginalised youth in Quebec, Canada, into a circus community where they learn circus skills and develop positive habits to sustain them later in life. In this example, young people join "Cirque de Monde" and the social circus more broadly. Participants of this study reported "becoming more physically fit and reducing drug use. Additionally, there was a marked and statistically significant increase in all the personal growth indicators" although to varying degrees (Spiegel and Parent, 2018:606). The outcomes for young people engaging with social circus from other studies have also been identified as having a sense of social inclusion (Kinnunen, Lidman, and Kakko, 2013), of being a 'better person' and improved self-esteem. Proponents of social circus have long proclaimed that this art form is a powerful stimulator of personal growth (Trotman, 2012; Kinnunen et al, 2013).

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Aging and the Aged

Conversely, Kwan and Drolet (2015) argue for an age-inclusive approach to community development by engaging the older and aging populations. The United Nations defines an older person as those over 60 years of age (UN, 2019), although this definition may vary within cultures and across countries.

Kwan and Drolet assert "for the first time in human history, the number of older people will surpass the number of children that are under the age of fourteen representing one of the 'biggest social transformations' societies will experience" (Kwan and Drolet, 2015: 589). Furthermore, the World Health Organisation (WHO) predicts the aging population will nearly triple from what it was in 2010 to 1.5 billion by 2050 (WHO, 2019).

Kwan and Drolet (2015) further suggest that with the number of older or aging people, there are many benefits to both individuals and society to engage them in community development processes. This is an even more plausible assertion when one considers the higher mobility rates of families in the 21st century. The associated loss of traditional family supports for many older family members can create loneliness, depression, and often, poverty. Also, while older people are living longer due to medical advances, they may not have the financial means to support themselves or engage in community life and activities.

Processes and objectives of community development are oriented towards collective actions through participatory and person-focused approaches (Matarrita-Cascante and Brennan, 2012). When utilised, there is potential to reduce social isolation, foster the development of interpersonal relationships and create a structure of belonging, all of which are important to building self-worth, sense of purpose, and collective efficacy (Black, 2008). Kwan and Drolet, (2015) ague the engagement of older people in community development processes will be essential in order to address the challenges faced by them, the human rights aspects of disadvantage for the aging population (Tang and Lee (2006) and to realise the full range of possibilities when employing a person-centred, empowerment focused, inclusive, participatory practice.

"for the first time in human history, the number of older people will surpass the number of children that are under the age of fourteen"

Kwan and Drolet (2015)

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indigenous

For Indigenous communities in Australia, community development has long been considered a potentially useful developmental approach, "including by Indigenous leaders who see it as consistent with Indigenous aspirations for greater control over their affairs" (Campbell and Hunt, 2013: 199). However, there has been inadequate funding by successive government over many years to fully realise this potential, instead the focus has been more on a 'top down' service delivery response dictated by governments (Campbell and Hunt, 2013). Even where a program is specifically named as a community development initiative, such as the long running Community Development Employment Program (CDEP), the focus is more on enterprise development and employment in the mainstream employment market (Martin, 2001) or work for the dole in Indigenous communities.

Kenny (2006:10) described community development as "… processes, tasks, practices and visions for empowering communities to take collective responsibility for their own development". Furthermore, she clarifies that empowerment refers to "the ways that power relationships are changed in the interests of disadvantaged, oppressed or exploited groups" (Kenny, 2006:163). In relation to Indigenous Australians, Campbell and Hunt suggest these definitions present challenges given their "history of dispossession and their on-going experience of being dominated by the settler society" (2013:200).

Few examples of successful community development initiatives in Australia involving Indigenous populations could be located within the literature. However, Campbell and Hunt (2013) report on one such initiative in Central Australia where "the Central Land Council had piloted a new approach to generating benefits from land use agreements by establishing a community development unit and encouraging Indigenous traditional owners to apply some of the income from land use agreements with mining companies and similar parties to community development activities" (2013: 197). There have been many reported benefits to Indigenous people from these initiatives, which have increased over time such as "creating opportunities for Indigenous people to be meaningly involved in decision-making and control of their own resources" (Campbell and Hunt, 2013: 210). However, for sustainable development of Indigenous communities, "governments need to recognise the negative effects of constantly changing policies and institutional arrangements which frustrate Indigenous development efforts" (Campbell and Hunt, 2013: 210). For Indigenous people to gain maximum benefit from community development initiatives, governments need to support Indigenous people to "identify and address their own issues, needs and problems within their own terms of reference" (Kenny, 2006:10). If this is to occur "governments will find they have to make major changes to the way they engage with Indigenous communities" (Campbell and Hunt, 2013: 211).

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indigenous cont.

These examples of community development practice are but a small snapshot of the many insightful and innovative developmental initiatives undertaken in both Australia and overseas. They demonstrate aspects of opportunity for developmental practice, which may be replicable in other geographical locations where community engagement and community development programs are operating to build the capacity and resilience of people living in urban, regional and remote locations.

For those seeking more information about contemporary community development practice Policy Press has published an excellent series of edited texts titled "Rethinking Community Development" which includes contributions from leading community development researchers, academics and practitioners nationally and internationally. Each text has a particular focus relevant to community development in the 21st century and would be a valuable collection for any community development agency or service.

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conclusion

Within the current literature reviewed it is clear there is a renewed focus towards community development practice within Australia. The commissioning of this literature review into current trends and practices within this field by a local government authority bears testament to this observation.

Governments are seeking to identify new and innovated strategies within community development practice to engage with communities and work with a broad range of population cohorts contained within their local government geographical footprint.

This document has been prepared to assist with this renewed enthusiasm to work in new and engaging ways within communities. To this end the literature review began by placing community development within an historical context and provides a brief overview of the origins of community development practice, both in the UK and Australia, since the 1950s. It also provides insights into the waxing and waning of various government's commitment towards community development initiatives and programs over the past 60 years, to what now appears to be a revival of interest in drawing upon participatory developmental approaches to working with communities.

Within a constantly changing global context it is clear the most pressing challenges for all governments are those concerning fiscal management and stability, population health management (particularly within the current COVID-19 global pandemic), and working to reduce the effects of global warming and climate change on the planet.Other proponents within the literature, assert the need to ensure local governments not only operate within an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable manner but they do so specifically through a climate change lens.

There are also opportunities for governments to grasp if they so choose, albeit within a very complex environment, including having flexibility to quickly adapt community development approaches to take advantage of the escalation in use of technology, social media and a broad array of online platforms, as a means to engage various cohorts and populations. Such technology has the ability to rapidly collectivise and coordinate cohorts of interested or affected individuals around a range of social, environmental, political, and/or economic issues. It could also deliver the means to immediately provide factual information via social media to counter the emergence of neoliberal popularist divisive misinformation, including providing links to reputable sources for individuals to do further research in their own time. Although to date, it was identified within the literature, there has been a reticence to fully embrace social media by both local governments and not for profit organisations within the community services sectors.

07. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conclusion cont.

The materials reviewed also pointed to the need for local governments to rethink the way they engage with communities through community development approaches. There is a questioning about the lack of consistency across councils regarding the ways in which local governments understand the role of community development. In turn, this affects governance, leadership, and resource allocations to community development programs and initiatives, within some local government jurisdictions. Thereby, either supporting or hindering the full realisation of the opportunities which community development engagement practices could see realised.

To conclude this discussion practice-based case examples have also been included to highlight several key strategies for engaging varying populations using community development approaches. It is hoped these examples may provide the stimulus for further discussion and reflection regarding alternative approaches across various cohorts, about how they might be engaged within a community development context, both now and into the future.

> **There are also opportunities for governments to grasp if they so choose, albeit within a very complex environment, including having flexibility to quickly adapt community development approaches to take advantage of the escalation in use of technology, social media and a broad array of online platforms, as a means to engage various cohorts and populations.**

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS

8.1 ARTS AND CULTURE

EMERGING TRENDS

- Only grant available focuses on arts (ie: RADF) but also work with youth and people with a disability
- Greater number of artists are presenting their work
- Trend toward handmade crafts, especially since COVID-19
- International movement toward street art, which can provide economic opportunities
- More people moving to regions and wanting to access arts events and activities
- Small number of local arts practitioners with little capacity to meet increased demand
- Lack of opportunities to engage youth, so less likely to pursue arts careers

"Where else can we find grants where we fit with the eligibility criteria?"

KEY CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- Lack of access to funding to purchase facilities, utilities and equipment
- Arts and cultural activities are not valued in this community
- Misperceptions about percentage of rates costs spent on arts in the local region
- Difficult for local artists to access regular, well-paid work and sustain their arts practice, which creates concerns for burnout
- Local/regional artists have less profile so miss out on opportunities
- Concerns about how to meet demand for arts events/activities at expected standards
- Lack of platforms for emerging practitioners to pursue arts in the local community

"If there were opportunities for artists to get paid, they would be able to practice more and less likely to go for high paying jobs (in other sectors) in this region."

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS

8.1 ARTS AND CULTURE

USE OF VIRTUAL AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

Positive Outcomes

- CQUniversity is exploring technology opportunities which are emerging internationally
- Some use of Facebook, Instagram, website and online booking system
- Use of technology can provide more affordability and reach people who are isolated
- Advertising on social media has been very successful and built the business in one year to a full-time capacity (pivotal for advertising – spreading word of mouth and reaching many new people)

Concerns

- Zoom for performing arts (and other arts) has been used but does not adapt well
- Internationally, most groups shut down rather than adapted
- Need more support with adapting to use of technology since COVID-19 – need a person who could provide advice and support at Council with this.
- Solo artists have no tech support and could use lots of help
- Need support to keep up to date with international trends in multimedia use

Opportunities

- Could use social media and other education/community awareness raising to change perception about arts and create long-term culture shift

> **"I advertise on social media which has been very successful and built the business in one year to a full-time capacity. It is pivotal for advertising – spreading word of mouth and reaching many new people."**

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS

8.1 ARTS AND CULTURE

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Working Well
- Council Arts staff are great but very busy

Opportunities for Arts Events and Activities
- Facilitate partnerships between artists and not-for-profit groups (or Council) to promote mental wellness and build social connections, self-worth and social equity
- Explore street art to engage with young people and as a regional economic opportunity
- Provide more opportunities for local artists to showcase their work, in this region and beyond

> **"There is now recognition of arts and singing as a vital tool in supporting good mental health. For example, I'm only alive because I'm singing."**

Support Sustainability of the Arts Sector
- Engage young people and provide pathways for ongoing participation in the arts
- Support to fund travel to professional development opportunities in other regions
- More upskilling opportunities in arts sector with few practitioners (eg: felt artists)
- Facilitate mentorships between local artist and individuals/organisations with higher profiles (workshops and onsite), which can have long-term impacts over generations
- Link artists with the support services they need, including accessing grants

Council Representatives and Council Services
- Improve information and processes for accessing Council Arts staff or provide a Community Arts Liaison Officer
- Councillors and council staff need a Code of Conduct regarding supporting the arts to create a more inclusive society (rather than using arts as a political tool to voice personal beliefs, victimise artists and devalue the regional arts sector)
- Streamline RADF grant application process (lot of work for a small grant amount)

> **"If you're not in the sector already it can be difficult to know who and where the Council Arts staff are, what they provide and how to access them."**

8. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS
8.2 COMMUNITY SAFETY

EMERGING TRENDS

Aggression
- More aggressive customers, often with mental illness or substance dependence
- Wider demographic of people who respond with anger, prompted by the constant divisive issues highlighted in social media

"First response officers report that people are "just angrier" than they used to be. We're not just seeing this in QPS; other people are asking for support for aggression in their industry."

Online Safety Concerns
- Increase in cybercrime, particularly aimed at older people and often unreported
- Phishing scams

Young People
- Young people experiencing online harassment and bulling
- Young people feel unsafe at night, due to prevalence of unlit public spaces

"Young people feel unsafe at night. The parks are not well lit. There are very few public spaces that they can gather that has lighting."

Service gaps
- Lack of housing results in people escaping domestic and family violence being transferred out of the region, with no support networks
- COVID-19 funding ceased in July but many people have not regained employment
- Emergency relief funding has been cut (service is reduced from 40 to 8 people per week) however the same level of need exists
- Long wait list for counselling services so issues escalate to crisis level
- High demand for psychosocial support

KEY CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- Domestic and family violence is an ongoing concern
- Mental illness and/or substance abuse cycles traps people in domestic violence
- Vandalism is an ongoing concern

"The community has given MRC feedback that they do not want lighting of public spaces so that people do not gather at night."

8. FINDINGS - FOCUS GROUPS

8.2 COMMUNITY SAFETY

USE OF VIRTUAL AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

- **Positive Outcomes**
- QPS website has very high level of community interaction
- QPS creating a Facebook page in coming months (performing well in other districts)
- Shift to online crime reporting by community, which enables people experiencing domestic and family violence to report via their mobile phone
- More facilitation and counselling online
- More flexibility in connecting with clients via Facetime, Zoom, texts and Messenger

Concerns
- Many reporting services are online only which disadvantages people who lack IT skills, devices and/or data
- People experiencing digital fatigue and need to talk to someone in person
- Young people prefer texts rather than phone calls or in-person meetings, which creates difficulties in building rapport and supporting the person
- Less personal interaction with DFV clients, which impacts support provision
- Need platforms that support safe and appropriate crime information and reporting
- Need to manage safety and privacy when connecting on public apps

"Young people are moving more and more into online activity and issues are starting younger. I did a presentation to a Year 1 class, where 80% of whom are involved in social media."

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Working Well
- QPS has had close working relationship with Council for years, including providing funding and providing workshops and education sessions
- Council's DFV and suicide prevention initiatives have been great campaigns

"QPS would be embarrassed to ask Council to do more – they already do so much."

More Opportunities
• Support ongoing community awareness of DFV, all year around
• Create similar youth initiatives as Council's DFV and suicide prevention campaigns
• Provide mental health or substance abuse training to staff (eg: library)
• Increase youth development staff to provide more positively-focused youth activities

YOU BELONG HERE

"Help (young people) feel valued and welcome, like they belong here."

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS
8.3 CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

EMERGING TRENDS

Sector
- Migration has been cut during COVID-19, but some skilled workers and their families are still arriving in Mackay
- Not enough resources to support migrants. (eg: advocacy with medical needs, legal services, housing issues, child care, etc)
- Lack of capacity to respond in a sensitive way to migrants
- Lack of social workers who are also migrants

Service Recipients
- Tourists are stuck here due to COVID-19
- People on bridging visas have limited access to supports and not eligible to work here, creating financial stress and dependence on family members
- Identity checks for applications (eg: for loans, rental housing or drivers licence) require documents migrants cannot provide
- People on working visa cannot rent independently and have to board with others
- Unknown if/when they can return to their home country, or return to work in Mackay

"Identity documents requirements are skewed and include a range of barriers for migrants."

KEY CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Advocacy
- Very little advocacy for migrants
- Migrants may lack understanding of cultural norms, or how to make others aware they do not understand, resulting in vulnerability and being open to abuse
- Migrants need help attending medical and other appointments that require clear understanding of information and documentation
- Negative impacts on migrant volunteers' mental and physical health when supporting other migrants with life-altering decisions (eg: medical procedures or court support)

Visas and Legal Issues
- Visa restrictions are very complex and migration website is difficult to navigate
- Difficult and costly to work through the often-changing legal system to apply for visas

Other
- Generalisations are made about migrants and their presumed culture rather than taking the time to listen to and understand them

"Migrants don't know what questions to ask, how to ask them or feel shy/hesitant and it's not in their culture to ask (or question a doctor), especially older women."

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS

8.3 CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

USE OF VIRTUAL AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

Positive Outcomes
- The library was useful in helping migrants connect with The Neighbourhood Hub
- LAMP worker helped to create more group participation

> **"The migration website is like a maze and they don't have great IT skills".**

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Working Well
- Zoom has opened many opportunities

More Opportunities
- Provide information in the airport about accommodation, transport and support options (printed or on electronic screens, in a range of languages)
- Provide opportunities for migrants and other newcomers to link with support (such as in library, tourist information centre, The Neighbourhood Hub or shopping centres)
- Library could be promoted as a central hub to access information and other supports
- Promote cultural festivals, national days etc of local migrant groups on social media
- Increase circulation of Migrant Voice (including hard copy in libraries, cafés, Asian supermarkets etc)
- Advocate for funding for The Neighbourhood Hub's migrant support programs

Internal
- Increase diversity of Council workforce and migrant representation on Council
- Provide cultural sensitivity and diversity training for frontline staff, where migrants share stories that increase understanding of perceptions, needs, fears and barriers
- Consult more regularly with migrants about their needs and potential solutions, with opportunity to speak directly to councillors
- Develop list of frequently asked questions to assist in interacting with migrants
- Support established migrants to be able to support new migrants
- Host smaller events more often that focus on migrants (not just Global Grooves)
- Implement social media strategies that enable community services and cultural groups/associations to share information across the whole community (eg: greater use of tagging).

> **"We miss having the LAMP worker, when there was more group participation."**

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS

8.4 DISABILITY

EMERGING TRENDS

- Lack of education among young people about needs of people with disability and how to advocate
- Lack of advocacy for people with disability – most is provided on a voluntary basis
- Increased reliance on online support (such as phone and websites) which can be very difficult for people with disability to access (increase since COVID-19)

"We do the same things over and over (person with disability and support worker). We need places to go and activities to do."

KEY CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Community Facilities and Activities
- Continually working to access funding for the service
- Limited activities for people with disability to participate in within the community
- Limited public toilets/change facilities to provide personal care to people with high needs

"We need a place for services to do this (provide personal care to people with high needs) in the middle of activities instead of going back to the service or the person's home."

Changing Places

"Council needs funds to retrofit current (toilet and personal care) facilities – we're so much behind the eight ball and need to get up to best practice."

Access
- Lack of access around Mackay streets, venues, private/commercial buildings, parks and buildings
- People with disability feel unsafe and isolate themselves due to lack of understanding (and possible discriminatory practices) at venues of how to support people in accessing events and facilities
- Lack of public transport

Service Gaps
- Lack of accessible housing for people with disability
- Lack of allied health services and other specialists, with long wait lists
- Lack of support for people with legal issues (eg: discrimination in tenancy)
- Difficult to attract trained professionals to Mackay region
- Particularly difficult for ATSI and ASSI community members with disability to find culturally appropriate disability support
- Navigating NDIS to access employment and Centrelink is very difficult

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS
8.4 DISABILITY

USE OF VIRTUAL AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

Accessing more training and workshops online (increased due to COVID-19)
- Supporting clients to access telehealth
- Use of MS Teams for team meetings enables more timely decision making and improved responsiveness for clients
- Online and virtual platforms have provided greater access for people with disability and chronic conditions to events, workshops and workplace activities
- iPhone translates print to Braille
- People with disability can access grants to update phones and have greater/continued contact with family and friends (due to COVID-19)
- Office 365 allows service to do things quicker and be more responsive for clients
- Focus40 Braille which is connected to keyboard and mobile phone, hand signing charts, screen readers, write description of images on social media

"I can use my computer to open up to the world. Zoom creates many more opportunities to participate in online events and festivals, and be a guest speaker at workshops outside Mackay."

Concerns
- Isolation of older people due to increased use of technology
- Isolation of people with disability who cannot afford Wi-Fi or updated phones
- Concerns for victims of crime or domestic violence (which is increasing) who cannot afford security cameras, etc

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS
8.4 DISABILITY

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Working Well
- Council requirement for better toilet/change facilities in new development plans

Advocacy and Awareness Raising
- Support advocacy by other services in the region (funding and moral support)
- Support disability services to increase awareness of state and federal members about local issues for people with disability (housing, accessibility, lack of workers)
- Advocate (with others) about poor Internet and Wi-Fi infrastructure in parts of the Mackay region
- Provide more education and advocacy about Auslan interpreting as a career path
- Consider options to support provision of housing for people with disability

Facilities and Venues
- Include provision of toilet/change facilities that meet needs of people with disability as a foundational requirement in initial planning stages, as part of the overall design
- Encourage established businesses, shopping centres, etc to meet their responsibility to provide accessible and appropriate change spaces
- Provide incentives for businesses to make venues, etc more accessible (including for prams and older people)

"(Council could) work with community and developers to find new initiatives to increase housing stock for people with disability and how to fund new housing development."

8.4 DISABILITY

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Access to Arts and Other Community Events
- Promote use of Companion card
- Promote MECC and other Council events in alternative formats (large print and braille) and ensure people get information that details how they can access these
- Provide scripts in advance for MECC events so it can be transferred to alternate formats (eg: Braille or audio described) for people with disability to access
- Promote the development of a 'Declaration of Commitment to Accessibility' that is to be included in budgets of grant applications for events, etc
- Provide grant application forms in easy read format and pro bono support for people with disability to complete grant applications (and promote availability of this support)
- Provide grants or other options to be able to access Auslan interpreters
- Write descriptions of images on Council social media content

Council Staff
- Provide training for all Council staff in access and inclusion (MECC and others)
- Improve responsiveness as there are long lead times to enact changes to meet the needs of people with disability

"There are only three Auslan interpreters in Mackay and they're not always available so we have to fly people in from Brisbane."

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS

8.5 ABORIGINAL, TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER & AUSTRALIAN SOUTH SEA ISLANDER

EMERGING TRENDS

- Younger people wanting to connect with their culture and country (mostly female)
- Some improvement in the lack of understanding of differences between Aboriginal, TSI and ASSI communities
- Large number of Aboriginal people who feel isolated from the local ASTI community
- Lack of mental health support for young children, families and adults
- No support groups for carers
- Major shortage of youth workers and support workers (of any cultural background)
- Difficult to find (new) people from ATSI/ASSI community to contribute to advisory groups, so their cultural concerns are not always included
- ASSI community does not have its own distinct voice
- Advancing ages of people in governance roles in cultural organisations with younger people not stepping up is noticeable

> **"Organisations are hanging on by a thread. It's rare to have young people, especially men, having a role in community-based organisations. Young people are being attracted away by the mining industry and jobs in cities. Young people are afraid to jump into the community space – they don't know enough about it."**

KEY CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Young People
- Young people need support to access places and spaces in the region
- Lack of young people in leadership roles

Consultation Processes
- Expectation that ATSI/ASSI community will contribute their expertise for free, which diminishes its value and can be misrepresented or misused
- Lack of communication and consultation with First Nations communities

Service Access
- No domestic assistance available for aged First Nations people
- Lack of staff due to lack of funding and reluctance to work in aged care sector
- First Nations people can be unwilling to access service due to concerns about family connections, confidentiality, quality or difficulty in contacting them
- Lack of centralised information about support services and community activities – electronic version is not accessible for most aged people

Other
- Lack of education regarding Traditional Owners
- Need for internal organisation and relationship building in Yuwi mob
- Council RAP does not identify how Council will work with community and services

8.5 ABORIGINAL, TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER & AUSTRALIAN SOUTH SEA ISLANDER

"Young (First Nations) people are humble and can be shy of considering a leadership role."

USE OF VIRTUAL AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

Opportunities
- Use Facebook, Zoom, Teams, website, text messaging to provide information to service users, access forms and improve referral processes

Concerns
- Aged people or people with low income struggle to use online platforms
- People have phones but limited access to Wi-Fi
- Challenge to access appropriately skilled people to build and maintain IT systems

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Working Well
- Seniors Expo is excellent
- Council investment in facilities like libraries and the lagoon are really valued and utilised by community

Support
- Facilitate First Nations' voices to be stronger in discussions with mining companies to meet their corporate social responsibility
- Walk alongside Yuwi mob to support them to organise internal processes, including relationship building between different factions and professional development
- Help ATSI/ASSI people feel they belong, and are valued and respected in this region
- Support young people to participate in service governance (training and mentoring)
- Explore Sea Ranger program to support connection to country by young people
- Support and encourage people to work locally and support their local community
- Work with community partners (eg: Greater Whitsunday Communities) to support young people to get involved and connected with their cultural community
- Provide financial support for volunteers to contribute in advisory committees, etc
- Demonstrate value of traditional culture (eg: cultural centre and signpost places of cultural significance, use traditional names and support local language)
- Support education of young people about costs, plans and Wi-Fi access processes

"Council needs to value our culture, history and local sites and demonstrate this value."

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS

8.5 ABORIGINAL, TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER & AUSTRALIAN SOUTH SEA ISLANDER

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Advocacy
- Support advocacy for more Indigenous services
- Assistance in advocating for space (land and property) to operate services
- Support with lobbying state and federal govt to improve regional connectivity

Within Council
- Share information about how to access specific cultural support from a central location (through Yuwi)
- Follow up on agreed actions, maintain new initiatives and be more responsive
- Make Council RAP public and demonstrate how it supports the local community
- Mentor a First Nations person to run for election on Council
- Increase ATSI/ASSI staff numbers in Council
- Improve Internet service at Jubilee Centre
- Provide free Wi-Fi in town centre

"Data indicates that young people want to get involved but in practical terms, we don't see this happening. Council could have a role in addressing this disconnect."

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS

8.6 HOUSING

EMERGING TRENDS

Sector

- Higher expectations of people with mental illness, with increased aggression pressure on staff and workloads and incident reporting
- Staff and volunteer mental health and wellbeing impacted by COVID-19 pandemic, with aggressive clients, cancelled holidays, increased stress and working from home
- Difficult to attract and retain skilled staff due to lack of affordable housing
- No extra funding to support the influx of people from southern states who expect the same level of service available in larger regions
- Homeless clients with very complex needs, including active addictions
- Increase in need to develop tenancy development skills (budget, life skills, hoarding)
- Lack of ATSI/ASSI staff to meet needs of the high number of ATSI/ASSI service users

> **"The increased expectation on the workforce is resulting in burnout for many workers and the volunteers governing the organisations."**

Service recipients

- Increased share housing of properties to offset mortgage and rental costs
- Share housing is the only option for some disadvantaged people, with negative impacts
- People being discharged from hospital into homelessness
- The cost of share housing is becoming unaffordable for people on low incomes
- Hot bedding of rental properties (two different tenants on rotating seven-day shifts)
- Higher rents with a preference to tenants working in mining companies
- Local residents are competing with people from southern states for housing
- Tradespeople coming to Mackay to work cannot find accommodation
- More single males find it hard to find affordable accommodation
- Cannot afford rents on youth allowance and limited crisis accommodation
- Exposure of vulnerable young people to drugs and alcohol in crisis accommodation
- Limited accessible housing for people with disability and mental illness
- Children with complex needs (16-18 and behaviour issues) are being hospitalised because no other housing options are available
- Pensioners struggling to secure affordable housing
- Women resorting to prostitution to meet housing costs, with a lack of women's homeless accommodation available
- Older women opting for motor homes due to lack of affordable housing, without consideration of potential loss of social networks, loneliness and family breakdown
- Increased demand for crisis accommodation and difficult to find exit points

> **"Owners with four or five bed houses have started to move families out and renting out per room to miners. The income is much higher, so owner will even pay for a cleaner."**

> **"(Women) resort to selling their bodies to pay for somewhere to live."**

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS

8.6 HOUSING

KEY CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES
- Lack of affordable housing, which impacts key and low-income workers, new workers to the region, Centrelink recipients, single people, older women, women experiencing domestic and family violence, youth, people with disability or mental illness
- The continual need for reporting and data collection puts a lot of pressure on staff

USE OF VIRTUAL AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

Positive Outcomes
- Teams and Zoom for online workshops and connecting with team and clients
- FaceTime and Messenger to connect with clients
- Using Office 365 and Teams to replace a physical server
- Less risk of losing records

Concerns
- Pre-recorded lessons do not allow for questions and discussion
- Some staff have a preference for interactive face to face training
- Less trainers coming to the region due to COVID
- Small groups/organisations may not have the capacity/skills to upgrade software
- Screen time overload from back-to-back online meetings, training, work, etc

> **"Not everyone will use covid QR code to sign in but has also increased capacity for people to use their phone."**

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Working Well
- Encouraging services and clients to use My Community Directory

More Opportunities
- Host a regional Housing and Homelessness forum to consider lateral solutions
- Facilitate mentorships to help small organisations maximise their housing (eg: disability service and construction/real estate/building industry)
- Support development of partnerships to create housing solutions, such as working together on out-of-scope work, data gathering or grant writing.
- Facilitate discussion with property owners (particularly in CBD) about creating/repurposing alternative housing options
- Explore alternative housing and land use options (eg: granny flats, tiny homes, etc).
- Explore what other LGAs are doing to increase the availability of affordable housing
- Map/audit current use of housing to identify underutilisation and repurposing options
- Facilitate awareness raising about culturally appropriate service provision
- Actively engage in Whitsunday, Isaac, Mackay Housing and Homelessness Network
- Support small entities to access/upgrade ICT via grants or one-on-one support

> **"There is a huge opportunity for Council to be an advocate (eg: Mayors Taskforce), (and build) mentorship connection between community services and industry partners (eg: disability service and construction/real estate/building industry) to look at how to get more affordable housing options on the ground."**

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS
8.7 MENTAL HEALTH

EMERGING TRENDS

Sector
- Competition within the sector for funding
- Complex, inter-connected issues for people with mental health concerns, such as family violence, homelessness and substance abuse
- Lack of services, including bulk billing doctors, with long wait lists

"Most services are totally overwhelmed...we don't have enough services here to meet the current demand."

Service recipients
- People moving to this region without knowledge of the lack of services
- Impacts of Covid-19 pandemic have been the tipping point for people – particularly young people and ATSI and ASSI communities
- Adolescent mental health concerns have become more complex, with a lack of age-appropriate responses
- Stigma persists around talking about mental health concerns
- Confusion about how to access and navigate through mental health service system
- Increase in alcohol and cannabis use as a coping mechanism (particularly among 20 – 60 year olds) and drug psychosis, and increased spending on alcohol and other drugs

"(We're) now seeing children from 5 years old, and 9- to 17-year-olds and young adults, including impacts from Covid.

The parents aren't coping so kids aren't coping."

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS
8.7 MENTAL HEALTH

KEY CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- Lack of psychological safety in a range of businesses and lack of trained staff to deal with changes in workplace culture
- Lack of housing; homelessness
- Lack of workers in the mental health sector, with a focus on crisis/acute needs
- Lack of community leadership
- Lack of suicide prevention/intervention trainers (particularly in schools and ATSI/ASSI communities) with heavy reliance on aging volunteers
- Lack of collaboration with ATSI/ASSI community to culturally appropriate suicide prevention services
- Use a range of other strategies to raise community awareness about current issues (eg: stand at Caneland, information in GP practices, TV, radio)

USE OF VIRTUAL AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

Positive Outcomes
- Prefer face to face contact but online options allow access to people in more remote locations
- Increased use of telehealth, particularly for people who cannot attend in person
- Use of Facebook groups, SMS messaging, Grapevine Group and other apps,
- Increased use of Teams and Zoom allows for contact with people across the state
- Anticipate that future change makers and influencers will emanate from Snapchat and Tik Tok

> **"A young person found a job through this site (Mackay Events and Happenings) and is now doing the work (online from France)."**

Concerns
- Mindful of physical and mental health impacts of extended use of online meeting platforms
- Online meeting platforms are less effective with large groups, with people more likely to disengage
- Speed of connectivity is very poor in parts of the region, including Northern Beaches
- Need to work with young people, and the right tools and platforms, to encourage engagement by other young people

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS
8.7 MENTAL HEALTH

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Working Well
- Continue work of the Council of Mayors Suicide Prevention Taskforce
- The library works well to provide safe community spaces, without stigma

More Opportunities
- Provide base funding then other community orgs contribute some funds, skills, etc to work collaboratively on key issues
- Facilitate building connections/relationships among different cohorts to develop social and other skills around a common interest (eg: ATSI family/regional history group in the library)
- Support provision of funding for building capacity of community leadership
- Need a cultural centre in the Mackay region
- Work more closely with the Yuwi Elder Group to encourage greater participation by the ATSI community and have greater use of community open spaces
- Need a community information hotline as a one stop shop, where calls are triaged and fed to a specific person with relevant expertise to manage

"It's brilliant that Mayor and Councillors are willing to stand up and advocate (Mayors Suicide Prevention Taskforce) – it makes it feel like someone is listening and willing to help and the impact is immeasurable."

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS

8.8 SPORT AND RECREATION

EMERGING TRENDS

Sector
- Funding grants are more competitive and more specific
- Limited grants or funding for big-ticket items
- Volunteers have limited capacity, expertise or time

Community
- Change in social trends regarding supporting high achievers
- Changes in social habits (expect greater efficiency and less interaction)

Service recipients
- Trend towards watching Netflix and gaming rather than outdoor sports

"People want to pay, play and go and have a set finish time (ring a bell in tennis); they don't want to socialise or hang around and have a coffee."

KEY CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES
- Cost of maintaining infrastructure
- Ongoing sustainability concerns
- Safe access to venues, footbaths, carparking, crossings and speedbumps
- Transport to sporting venues
- Grant processes are lengthy and complicated
- Grants only support very small events ($1000) or very large events ($250 000)
- State and national sporting associations may have very traditional and standardised approaches and are resistant to new/different approaches

"The biggest barrier is the couch – trend towards watching Netflix, gaming, etc rather than outdoor sports."

8.8 SPORT AND RECREATION

USE OF VIRTUAL AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

Positive Outcomes
- Online booking systems and via social media
- SMS for confirming players and group texts
- Promote via social media

"Technology has made a big difference – it gives us an edge and makes us much more efficient and we are better prepared, we need to move with the times."

Concerns
- Competes with time spent engaging in outdoor sports
- Need to keep the use of technology simple

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Working Well
- Council has been helpful, very approachable, negotiable and easy to work with

More Opportunities
- Provide support to liaise with other organisations (eg: Mackay Airport)
- Support the promotion of sports tourism
- Advocacy for Mackay accommodation, social events, etc. needs to be structured to meet the needs of sports tourism
- Encouraging the use of buses to travel to major sporting events

"Council has been helpful, very approachable, negotiable and easy to work with."

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS
8.9 YOUTH

EMERGING TRENDS

Transport
- 100 hour drivers licence requirement restricts young people from driving to work
- Lack of public transport, especially in Sarina, Walkerston, Calen and the Valley
- PCYC driving program is restricted by eligibility criteria and availability of volunteers

Accommodation
- Lack of crisis accommodation (including ATSI hostel), especially for young couples
- Lack of community activities which leads to anti-social behaviour
- Concerns about employment and housing for 17 to 21-year-olds
- Lack of support for youth without a disability but cannot manage independently

Other
- Seen to be loitering but just want public places to socialise safely (including at night)
- ·Exposed to alcohol and drugs through school and socially (pervasive and pressuring)
- A nationwide problem in encouraging young people to engage

"We need support for young people who don't have a disability but also can't function at a 'normal' capacity who are only able to get low skilled jobs like washing dishes – turn of the market could leave them unemployed and they don't have opportunity to build skills for advancement."

KEY CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Sector
- Difficulty attracting and retaining staff impacts service sustainability and consistency
- Lose staff due to inconsistent work hours, which is due to fluctuating client numbers
- Young people are suspicious of attempts to engage with them
- Very difficult to connect with schools
- Silo approach of organisations who work in isolation and are reluctant to refer clients
- Services are focused on service delivery with little time to collaborate with others

"Young people can recognise problems but don't have any solutions or want someone else to work it out."

08. FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUPS

8.9 YOUTH

USE OF VIRTUAL AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

Preferences and Access
- Young people prefer Facebook (for events), Messenger, Instagram and texting over email or phone calls, but could be risks in relying solely on Facebook or Messenger
- Zoom and working from home is more productive, with less travel or parking issues
- Young people prefer to engage through Zoom, Teams or FaceTime – face to face is difficult due to lack of public transport, finding someone to pick them up, etc
- Young people often do not have data so congregate around Canelands or libraries

Opportunities
- Establish tables in parks and other public spaces with solar lights and places to charge phone and access data (or free Wi-Fi in public phone boxes)

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Working Well
- Council has previously been a good provider of identified traineeships and apprenticeships

More Opportunities
- Encourage better connection between youth services
- Advocate for the development and provision of more houses in this region
- Fulfil commitment of identified traineeships and apprenticeships in Council
- Provide cashless options for paying for public transport
- Provide bus services that meet current needs (smaller buses running more often)
- Mayor to champion Mackay as a good place for young people to live, with (safe) social community activities and career opportunities
- Plan events with consideration of a range of age groups (not just little children)
- Establish a 'Youth Council within Council' as part of regional decision-making

"Young people feel left out and that they're not included in local events and activities. Ultimately, they want a safe place away from parents where they can hang out with their friends, with food and music. It doesn't have to be fancy or expensive. For example, alcohol-free nights at the night clubs, Bluewater Lagoon and council pool open at night for different age groups, or library open at night."

09. DATA ANALYSIS

This research involved collecting data from nine different cohorts about trends in their sector, as well as the needs and concerns they encounter. Since this data is quite specific to their sector and organisation, relatively few correlations can be found across all the cohorts in the overall data received. For example, the concerns raised by participants in the sports and recreation cohort bear little resemblance to those discussed in the CALD cohort.

This reflects the importance of considering the needs of each cohort individually and developing responses that specifically address them. It also aligns with the structure of the Community Programs Team, where roles are identified to support each of these particular cohorts. As such, data in this analysis has been presented according to key activities or functions (eg: advocacy or provision of facilities) but each of these may then include divergent details from different cohorts.

A summary of this data is provided below but it is recommended that the full version also be reviewed by each relevant staff member, to gain a comprehensive understanding of each activity/function. This is provided in Appendices A.

Advocate for:
- Improved Internet and Wi-Fi infrastructure in parts of the Mackay region
- Development and provision of more housing in this region
- Needs of other services in the region (funding, premises, service delivery concerns)
- ·mproved accessibility for people with a disability

Facilitate Linkages that:
- Provide opportunities for migrants and other newcomers to link with supports
- Facilitate connections among different cohorts to develop social and other skills
- Encourage better connections between services (eg: youth sector)
- Support artists to create stronger/more links with support services

Facilitate mentoring relationships between:
- Small and larger organisations (eg: housing sector)
- Local artists and higher profile state-wide artists
- Established migrants and new migrants
- First Nations people and Mackay Regional Council councillors
- Young people and committee members in not-for-profit organisations

Facilitate partnerships that support:
- Artists and not-for-profit services to provide collaborative community services
- Young people to engage in their cultural community
- Creation of housing solutions

Support education of young people about:
- Wi-fi and data plans, costs and access processes
- Participating in governance in not-for-profit organisations

09. DATA ANALYSIS
cont.

Provide grants or financial support for:
- Small entities to access/upgrade ICT via grants or one-on-one support
- Community collaborative work (provide base funding and request co-contributions)
- Building leadership capacity in the community
- Volunteers to contribute in advisory committees
- Auslan interpreters

Grant Applications and Support
- 'Declaration of Commitment to Accessibility' in budgets of grant applications for events, etc
- Provide grant applications in easy-to-read format
- Provide pro bono support for people with disability to complete grant applications

Infrastructure, Facilities and Other Resources
- Cultural centre, signpost places of cultural significance, use of traditional names
- Community information hotline, where calls are triaged and referred to relevant service
- Public spaces (parks) with solar lights, data access and phone charge stations for young people

Engage with young people to:
- Explore street art as a regional economic opportunity
- Provide career pathways in the arts
- Encourage participation in regional decision-making (eg: 'youth council within council')

Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and Australian South Sea Islanders to:
- Promote a sense of being valued, respected and of belonging
- Encourage greater community participation and use of community open spaces
- Support professional development, including relationship building between factions

Engage with migrant communities to better understand their needs and potential solutions

Support ongoing awareness of:
- Domestic and family violence
- Culturally appropriate service provision

Increase promotion of:
- Library as central hub to access information and supports
- Mackay as a safe place for young people, with social and career opportunities
- Significant days/events for migrant and cultural groups
- Companion Card, MECC events in alternative formats
- Sports tourism

Host:
- Regional housing and homelessness forum
- Smaller events more often that focus on migrants
- Similar youth initiatives as Council's DFV and suicide prevention campaigns
- Opportunities for local artists to showcase their work
- Events that encompass a range of age groups

09. DATA ANALYSIS CONT.
cont.

Use Library as:
- Central hub to access information and supports (eg: for migrants, newcomers)
- Provider of groups/activities that build connections and develop social and other skills

Public Transport
- Cashless payment options and smaller buses running more often
- Encourage use of buses for major sporting and other events

Council Planning Processes
- Advocate for more/alternative housing options that also meet needs of people with disability
- Audit current use of housing to identify underutilisation and repurposing options
- Include provision of fully accessible toilet/change facilities in initial planning stages of development

Increase/improve information about:
- Migrants and related events in the community and to support newcomers
- MECC events more accessible for people with disability
- RAP and how it supports the local community

Social Media
- Write descriptions of images on Council social media content (for vision impaired)
- Social media strategies that facilitate information sharing across the whole community

10. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

This desktop research included reviewing all the Connecting Up case studies published between 12 November 2019 and 20 September 2021.

Connecting Up is a part of the Infoxchange Group www.connectingup.org and has a mission of providing technology products, services, training, and resources to the not-for-profit sector, giving them power to fulfil their own missions.

The following applications were identified as assisting the services to provide community support and development in Australia.

- Zoom
- Microsoft on-premise products
- ·Microsoft 365 (Including Teams, Office, OneDrive etc)
- Adobe products
- DiviPay
- Tableau

Community services organisations also reported purchasing refurbished computers and the value of accessing digital learning via www.connectingup.org. A brief overview of each case study is outlined in the table 2: Connecting Up Case Studies no the next pages.

Mackay Regional Council's opportunity to support the local community sector to increase community impact through the use of online platforms includes:

1. **Provide information and education** to the community sector about the Connecting Up Donations and Discounts Program www.connectingup.org/donations/microsoft-open-charity
2. **Publish and promote** digital learning opportunities for community service workers
   - Microsoft training guides and resources https://digitaltransformation.org.au/guides/tech-foundations/ms-365-cloud-training-it-administrators
   - TechSoup Microsoft Digital Skills Centre https://techsoup.course.tc/catalog?type=microsoft-digital-skills-center
   - TechSoup's courses offerings https://techsoup.course.tc/catalog?type=microsoft-digital-skills-center
3. **Coordinate** local technology networking and educational events for community service workers. Options include:
   - Promote the access to Free IT and other courses at the library and on LinkedIn Learning for Mackay Library card holders. Support community workers to log into and take a tour of LinkedIn Learning https: www.mackay.qld.gov.au/libraries/elibrary/elearning
   - Establishing a local Community Services Technology Community of Practice to discuss local needs, share ideas, solutions and peer to peer support
   - Linking into events offered by the ASBAS Program www.asbas.rdabrisbane.org.au/
4. **Present** emails and information with the reader in mind. Mackay Libraries ENEWS provides a good example of how to present information clearly so it is simple to read and understand. A structured email format for information provision rather than a block or large blocks of text would be more helpful for the reader to digest.

10. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

cont.

TABLE 2 : CONNECTING UP CASE STUDIES

Service Type	Technology Donated or Discounted	Comment	Reference
Crisis response, case management, advocacy and therapeutic service to women and children experiencing family violence and at risk of homelessness	Zoom Microsoft 365 Adobe Creative Cloud	"These are vital technology resources that have ensured continuity of support for the Centre's clients, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic."	Connecting Up 1
Women's Legal Service	Microsoft Licences Server Software Adobe Acrobat Technology Training	"This technology and training have significantly boosted Women's Legal Service's ability to provide integrated socio-legal support for women, a third of whom are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and face additional barriers to accessing justice and support."	Connecting Up 2
Future Problem Solving Australia	MS Teams OneDrive Training	"…helped more than 100,000 future doctors, lawyers, engineers and government decision makers hone their problem-solving skills."	Connecting Up 3
The Autism Association of Western Australia (AAWA) provides 24 hour care to people living with autismv	DiviPay	"Each week, the finance team was withdrawing cash from an ATM, separating it into envelopes for each house and personally delivering each envelope to 60 houses across Perth. Time consuming and high risk of human error. Keval replaced his old process in less than a week. From DiviPay's web platform Keval was able to instantly issue a unique virtual card to each caregiver and use DiviPay's budgets to track spending and enforce card limits in real-time. Whenever cards are running low Keval can top them up with the click of a button."	Connecting Up 4

10. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY
cont.

TABLE 2 : CONNECTING UP CASE STUDIES

Service Type	Technology Donated or Discounted	Comment	Reference
Uniting Church Australia Group, Uniting AgeWell	DiviPay	"464 hours saved every week and a renewed focus on providing quality client services. With the ability to issue new cards in less than 10 seconds with financial controls tied to the organisation's expense policy built in, Rubi knows introducing DiviPay has "changed things in a big way". Rubi uses the budgeting tool in DiviPay to track, control and report on spending at each home care service location. And with automatic transaction coding and custom fields to track expenses against individual clients, the month-end accounting work is completely automated."	Connecting Up 5
Centrecare is a Catholic not-for-profit that delivers professional counselling, support, mediation and training services throughout Western Australia	Refurbished desktops and laptops Microsoft Office 365 Adobe Creative Cloud Tableau	"Tableau Desktop and Tableau Prep Builder are software applications for data preparation, analysis, and visualization. Through a drag-and-drop interface, they allow users to connect to most databases and spreadsheets, create and share interactive visualizations and dashboards, and prepare data for analysis. No programming is necessary."	Connecting Up 6

11. CONCLUSION

The research reported on in this document was initiated by Mackay Regional Council. The purpose was to delve into and understand the needs of specific specialist groups within the Mackay regional community. These groups were arts and culture, community safety, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and Australian South Sea Islanders, housing, mental health, sport and recreation and youth. Each of these cohorts align with the focus and priority work areas of the Community Programs Team within Council.

The intention for the commissioning of this piece of research is to draw on the findings to inform the development of the Council's Strategic Plan for the Community Programs Team for the next five years.

Nine focus groups were consulted and overall, their needs were diverse and specific to their respective areas of expertise. However, some consistent themes running throughout the responses were noted as the need for:
- More accommodation/housing availability and diversity to meet the needs of a range of people (professional practitioners, trade and essential workers, people with a disability, youth, aged, women affected by domestic and family violence, people on low incomes etc.)
- A central point to easily access a broad range of community information
- Council to assist with gathering and providing funding information, grant application writing, support and advocacy to access more funding sources and options.

Additionally, every group acknowledged they had increased their usage of social media during the COVID-19 pandemic, to varying degrees. Their changed usage was dependent upon knowledge levels and expertise in the use of technology, online platforms, social media and access to reliable Wi-Fi. This correlates with the findings of the literature review which noted the unprecedented opportunities now available for community development practitioners, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, to interact more comprehensively with community groups by utilising social media and other platforms.

The up-take of these technologies has increased exponentially since the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic and there are now more new opportunities to engage with various cohorts, such as aged people and youth, than ever before. This could be seen as the new frontier for community development practice in the 21st century if the vision and support, including financial assistance to upgrade technological capabilities, are forthcoming from the leaders within Council. The challenge to adapt to these new mediums for developmental practice, however, also needs to be fully embraced by the Community Programs Team for successful outcomes to be achieved.

Alongside the need for increased housing options, the research data also highlighted the difficulty in attracting and retaining a range of professional and specialist practitioners to the region. In particular, these included mental health specialists, bulk billing doctors, specialist artists, youth, disability and other community service workers and Auslan interpreters.

11. CONCLUSION
cont.

The unique needs of some cohorts are evident in data collected from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community members. This was particularly in relation to financial stress for migrants with visas that restrict them from accessing paid work, free health care (due to Medicare ineligibility) or Centrelink benefits and also being unable to return to their country of origin due to COVID-19 restrictions. This is a problem not specific to the Mackay Regional Council area but significantly affects the CALD populations in this region.

Interestingly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI) and Australian South Sea Islanders (ASSI) who participated in the focus groups identified the need for younger people from within their respective cultural communities to become more involved in community group governance. The next generations need support and training to move into those roles, when older community members step down from their responsibilities. This was also identified by the youth focus group in relation to younger people (including ATSI and ASSI community members) being introduced and mentored into roles within Council.

Positive initiatives already undertaken by Mackay Regional Council were identified by several focus group members. In particular, the Mayor's taskforces for domestic and family violence and suicide prevention were mentioned as leading examples. The youth focus group members believed it would also be very helpful for the Mayor to establish a similar taskforce for youth.

The community safety group commented on very positive working relationships already held with Council. They also acknowledged the high levels of cooperation between Council and other bodies in regard to community policing, domestic and family violence and community disaster planning and recovery.

The libraries and the services they offer were also recognised as being beneficial to individuals and the community overall. Because of the enthusiasm about the libraries' broad accessibility and service provision, focus group members identified further opportunities for library services to build connections between community members and upskill them in use of technology, social skills and/or other areas.

It is also important to acknowledge Mackay Regional Council's commitment to maintain currency of community development knowledge and practice, which is evident in the scope of this project. Specifically, Council requested the inclusion of desktop literature searches relating to emerging issues and trends in contemporary community development work.This highlighted the challenges and opportunities for local governments operating within a context where they must be responsive to community needs, while remaining viable and sustainable as a Council. They must do this within an increasingly contested and politically divisive society while also managing fiscal responsibilities and complex and competing community demands relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and emissions reduction.

11. CONCLUSION
cont.

Relevant case studies were included in the literature review to demonstrate useful examples, from Australia and elsewhere, relating to current or emerging community development practice. These highlight positive outcomes for artists in regional and remote areas of Australia, for the aging and aged in Australia and overseas, for young people and for Aboriginal Communities in partnership with mining companies in Central Australia. It is hoped these examples may be utilised to stimulate discussion and new ideas about alternative ways of working with various cohorts within Mackay Regional Council's footprint.

Additionally, a desktop review was conducted on Connecting Up case studies published between 12 November 2019 and 20 September 2021. Connecting Up is a part of the Infoxchange Group www.connectingup.org and provides technology products, services, training, and resources to the not-for-profit sector, giving them power to fulfil their own mission. A brief overview of each case study is also presented in this document, identifying a range of applications that can assist services to provide community support.

In a post COVID-19 world where the way in which governments, businesses and community service agencies conduct their work will most likely change forever, the challenges are now more about how to harness new possibilities and opportunities to engage with others to make a difference for the better in the quality of life for all citizens. This report aims to highlight research and information that will create the impetus for change and the betterment of all.

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13. APPENDICES A – DATA ANALYSIS

Facilitate Partnerships and Linkages; Advocate

	Arts & Culture	Comm Safety	CALD	Disability	ATSI & ASSI	Housing	Mental Health & Welbeing	Sport & Rec	Youth
Advocate (with others) about poor Internet and Wi-Fi infrastructure in parts of the Mackay region	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	
Provide base funding then other community orgs contribute some funds, skills, etc to work collaboratively on key issues	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
Advocate for the development and provision of more houses in this region	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
Provide cashless options for paying for public transport	○	○	○	○	○		○	○	●
Provide bus services that meet current needs (smaller buses run more often)	○	○	○	○	○		○	○	●
Facilitate partnerships between artists and not-for-profit groups (or Council) to promote mental wellness and build social connections, self-worth and social equity	●	○	○	○	○		○		●
Facilitate mentorships between local artist and individuals/organisations with higher profiles (workshops and onsite), which can have long-term impacts over generations	●		●						
Link artists with the support services they need, including accessing grants									
Provide information in the airport about accommodation, transport and support options (printed or on electronic screens, in a range of languages)	●		●	○	○	○	○		
Provide opportunities for migrants and other newcomers to link with support (such as in library, tourist information centre, The Neighbourhood Hub or shopping centres)				○	○	○	○		○

Facilitate Partnerships and Linkages: Advocate

	Arts & Culture	Comm Safety	CALD	Disability	ATSI & ASSI	Housing	Mental Health & Welbeing	Sport & Rec	Youth
Advocate for funding for The Neighbourhood Hub's migrant support programs			●						○
Support advocacy by other services in the region (funding and moral support)			○				○		
Facilitate awareness raising about culturally appropriate service provision			○						
Support disability services to increase awareness of state and federal members about local issues for people with disability (housing, accessibility, lack of workers)				●	○	●			
Include provision of toilet/change facilities that meet needs of people with disability as a foundational requirement in initial planning stages, as part of the overall design				●	○				
Encourage established businesses, shopping centres, etc to meet their responsibility to provide accessible and appropriate change spaces				●					
Provide incentives for businesses to make venues, etc more accessible (including for prams and older people)				●					
Provide scripts in advance for MECC events so it can be transferred to alternate formats (eg: Braille or audio described) for people with disability to access				●					
Facilitate First Nations' voices to be stronger in discussions with mining companies to meet their corporate social responsibility					●				
Support advocacy for more Indigenous services					●				
Assistance in advocating for space (land and property) to operate services					●				
Support with lobbying state and federal govt to improve regional connectivity (Internet)					●				
Share information about how to access specific cultural support from a central location (through Yuwi)					●				

Facilitate Partnerships and Linkages; Advocate

	Arts & Culture	Comm Safety	CALD	Disability	ATSI & ASSI	Housing	Mental Health & Welbeing	Sport & Rec	Youth
Facilitate building connections/relationships among different cohorts to develop social and other skills around a common interest (eg: ATSI family/regional history group in the library)					⬤				
Need a community information hotline as a one stop shop, where calls are triaged and fed to a specific person with relevant expertise to manage				◌	⬤				
Facilitate mentorships to help small organisations maximise their housing (eg: disability service and construction/real estate/building industry)						⬤			
Support development of partnerships to create housing solutions, such as working together on out-of-scope work, data gathering or grant writing.						⬤			
Facilitate discussion with property owners (particularly in CBD) about creating/repurposing alternative housing options						⬤			
Support the promotion of sports tourism								⬤	
Advocacy for Mackay accommodation, social events, etc. needs to be structured to meet the needs of sports tourism								⬤	
Encouraging the use of buses to travel to major sporting events								⬤	
Encourage better connection between youth services									⬤
Mayor champion Mackay as a good place for young people to live, with (safe) social community activities and career opportunities									⬤
Plan events with consideration of a range of age groups (not just little children)									⬤

Community Development Projects

Community Development Projects	Arts & Culture	Comm Safety	CALD	Disability	ATSI & ASSI	Housing	Mental Health & Welbeing	Sport & Rec	Youth
Support ongoing community awareness of DFV, all year around	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Host a regional Housing and Homelessness forum to consider lateral solutions	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○
Explore street art to engage with young people and as a regional economic opportunity	●								○
Demonstrate value of traditional culture (eg: cultural centre and signpost places of cultural significance, use traditional names and support local language)	○				●				
Provide more opportunities for local artists to showcase work, in this region and beyond	●								
Engage young people and provide pathways for ongoing participation in the arts	●			●					
Support established migrants to be able to support new migrants			●						
Host smaller events more often that focus on migrants (not just Global Grooves)			●						
Consider options to support provision of housing for people with disability				●					
Walk alongside Yuwi mob to support them to organise internal processes, including relationship building between different factions and professional development					●				
Help ATSI/ASSI people feel they belong, and are valued and respected in this region					●				
Explore Sea Ranger program to support connection to country by young people					●				○
Support and encourage people to work locally and support their local community					●				○
Work with community partners (eg: Greater Whitsunday Communities) to support young people to get involved and connected with their cultural community					●				○

Community Development Projects

Project	Arts & Culture	Comm Safety	CALD	Disability	ATSI & ASSI	Housing	Mental Health & Welbeing	Sport & Rec	Youth
Provide financial support for volunteers to contribute in advisory committees, etc					●				○
Need a cultural centre in the Mackay region					●				
Work more closely with the Yuwi Elder Group to encourage greater participation by the ATSI community and have greater use of community open spaces					●				
Establish a 'Youth Council within Council' as part of regional decision-making					●				●
Create similar youth initiatives as Council's DFV and suicide prevention campaigns					●				●

Regional Upskilling

Project	Arts & Culture	Comm Safety	CALD	Disability	ATSI & ASSI	Housing	Mental Health & Welbeing	Sport & Rec	Youth
Support small entities to access/upgrade ICT via grants or one-on-one support	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○
Support provision of funding for building capacity of community leadership	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Support to fund travel to professional development opportunities in other regions			○	○	○	○	○	○	○
More upskilling opportunities in arts sector with few practitioners (eg: felt artists)	●								
Fulfil commitment of identified traineeships and apprenticeships in Council					●				●
Provide more education and advocacy about Auslan interpreting as a career path			○	●					
Mentor a First Nations person to run for election on Council					●				
Support education of young people about costs, plans and Wi-Fi access processes					●				○
Support young people to participate in service governance (training and mentoring)					●				●

Council Services, Facilities and Staff

Council Services, Facilities and Staff	Arts & Culture	Comm Safety	CALD	Disability	ATSI & ASSI	Housing	Mental Health & Welbeing	Sport & Rec	Youth
Improve Internet service at Jubilee Centre	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
Provide free Wi-Fi in town centre	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
Library could be promoted as a central hub to access information and other supports	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
Explore alternative housing and land use options (eg: granny flats, tiny homes, etc).	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○
Explore what other LGAs are doing to increase the availability of affordable housing	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○
Map/audit current use of housing to identify underutilisation and repurposing options	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○
Increase youth development staff to provide more positively-focused youth activities	●						○	○	○
Promote cultural festivals, national days etc of local migrant groups on social media	○		●						○
Promote use of Companion card	○	○		●					
Promote MECC and other Council events in alternative formats (large print and braille) and ensure people get information that details how they can access these	○	○	○	●					
Promote the development of a 'Declaration of Commitment to Accessibility' that is to be included in budgets of grant applications for events, etc	○	○		●					
Provide grant application forms in easy read format and pro bono support for people with disability to complete grant applications (and promote availability of this support)	○			●					
Provide grants or other options to be able to access Auslan interpreters	○			●					

Council Services, Facilities and Staff

	Arts & Culture	Comm Safety	CALD	Disability	ATSI & ASSI	Housing	Mental Health & Welbeing	Sport & Rec	Youth
Write descriptions of images on Council social media content	○			●					
Provide training for all Council staff in access and inclusion (MECC and others)	○			●					
Improve responsiveness as there are long lead times to enact changes to meet the needs of people with disability	○			●					
Improve information and processes for accessing Council Arts staff or provide a Community Arts Liaison Officer	●								
Streamline RADF grant application process (lot of work for a small grant amount)	●								
Councillors and council staff need a Code of Conduct regarding supporting the arts to create a more inclusive society (rather than using arts as a political tool to voice personal beliefs, victimise artists and devalue the regional arts sector)	●								
Provide mental health or substance abuse training to staff (eg: library)			○	○	○		○		○
Increase circulation of Migrant Voice (including hard copy in libraries, cafés, Asian supermarkets etc)		●	●						
Increase diversity of Council workforce and migrant representation on Council			●						
Provide cultural sensitivity and diversity training for frontline staff, where migrants share stories that increase understanding of perceptions, needs, fears and barriers			●						
Consult more regularly with migrants about their needs and potential solutions, with opportunity to speak directly to councillors			●						
Develop list of frequently asked questions to assist in interacting with migrants			●						
Implement social media strategies that enable community services and cultural groups/associations to share information across the whole community (eg: greater use of tagging).			●						

Council Services, Facilities and Staff	Arts & Culture	Comm Safety	CALD	Disability	ATSI & ASSI	Housing	Mental Health & Welbeing	Sport & Rec	Youth
Follow up on agreed actions, maintain new initiatives and be more responsive					●				
Make Council RAP public and demonstrate how it supports the local community					●				
Increase ATSI/ASSI staff numbers in Council					●				
Actively engage in Whitsunday, Isaac, Mackay Housing and Homelessness Network						●			
Establish tables in parks and other public spaces with solar lights and places to charge phone and access data (or free Wi-Fi in public phones)									●