



Acacia Ridge Community Support Inc.

Annual Report 2017

President's Report

The past 12 months at Acacia Ridge Community Support Inc. (ARCSI) have been incredibly busy, exciting and fruitful. Under the direction of Trish Cattermole, our extraordinary Director, the Centre has expanded its activities and impact on our community. Her tireless efforts on behalf of the Centre are to be commended.

We have continued in all our ongoing community activities, including our Food Co-op and the provision of Emergency Relief. With the generous support of the Brisbane City Council and other partners, we have also delivered various community engagement events and initiatives across our district including the Moorooka Laneway Festival and our highly successful Party in the Park here in Acacia Ridge. Good weather and good times were enjoyed by all.

Events are an important means to strengthening ARCSI's leadership concerning significant issues affecting our community. Our "Acacia Ridge Says Not Now, Not Ever" event to mark Domestic Violence Prevention Month helped unite our community's leadership along with regular members of the community to reinforce the message that domestic and family violence is completely unacceptable. The event also raised awareness of the variety of supports available to those affected. We have also played our part supporting the future of Queensland's community sector by hosting many university students on placement over the past year. Our students have

been very enthusiastic and productive workers undertaking various tasks while here.

An exciting outcome for the Centre, after much lobbying by Trish, was that we were granted the lease on the old Annerley-Moorooka Senior Citizens' Hall at Clifton Street, Moorooka. This was necessary as our Acacia Ridge facility was bursting at the seams. This facility, now renamed "The Social Space", will become home to a number of social enterprise, skill-building, and community capacity-building initiatives over the next 12 months.

We have continued our commitment to initiatives that promote the health, well-being, social inclusion, and active civic participation of people across our community. This has included a physical fitness programme funded through the BCC Active Parks programme and an Active Citizenship Day to provide information on voting rights and responsibilities along with assistance with registering on the electoral roll. Trish has been successful in gaining NewAccess, a free mental health coaching service that supports people experiencing mild levels of depression and anxiety. Developed by *beyondblue* and funded through the Brisbane South PHN, ARCSI's new programme has a specific focus on culturally and linguistically diverse communities across Brisbane's Southside. Three new coaches will be working out of our offices for the next 13 months. We have also continued exploring other community initiatives such as a Prenatal Service Model design, and a suicide prevention programme at the request of our local Indigenous community.

Our most outstanding activity in 2016-2017 has been our growing delivery of programmes funded through the Queensland Government's "Skilling Queenslanders for Work" initiative. Sebastian Ross-Hagebaum has done a monumental job in applying for funding for scores of programmes as they have become available, in turn creating several new positions in our Training Team. Coupled with the launch of other new program areas, 2016-17 has been a year of significant staffing growth at ARCSI. We currently employ 18 people throughout the Centre.

The successes of our training programmes in delivering real employment to a large proportion of our students and trainees has been a very satisfying outcome. As a result of this work, ARCSI was nominated for the Community Training Initiative of the Year award (Metropolitan Region). Our success in winning our section was a great accolade for all of our dedicated workers, students and trainees over the past year. We will now attend the State Finals on 1 September.

The committee and staff have also been working towards a rebranding of the organisation to better reflect our multi-faceted activities, including our widening geographical footprint. Exciting announcements are coming soon.

One of the problems of our growing success has been that after many years, we have unfortunately been forced to find a new auditor as our budget had grown beyond her certification. We have also employed a part time accountant to assist Astra McCormack with the increasingly complex financial arrangements.

As a committee we would like to acknowledge the incredible hard work of all of the staff. They freely give of their time, and their flexibility with taking on tasks outside of their own areas of responsibilities means that the Centre can continue to flourish. Our hard working reception staff are to be thanked for the difficult job they do so professionally and cheerfully. They are the face of ARCSI.

Our volunteers however are the mainstay of what we do. The fact that so many can be depended on week in and week out to do their bit makes ARCSI

an active, harmonious Centre in the community. Whether you work in our Co-op, drive to Foodbank, mow or tidy the grounds, or even just stack the dishwasher or put out the bins, your help is invaluable and we thank you.

Lastly, I would also like to thank all the members on the Management Committee for their ongoing support during the year. Your commitment to attend monthly meetings and take on tasks as they arise is what makes things happen. A big thank you.



Colette Crossley
President

Director's Report

I am delighted to provide this year's report, a year which has seen significant growth in programmes, services and stronger connections with the community.

The ongoing delivery of Emergency Relief and our Food Co-op continue to provide a vital safety net to our community, and in many cases, provide the foundation support for people to remain engaged in productive activities (e.g. employment and training) that help them to break cycles of economic and social exclusion in the longer run. We have also been able to offer legal assistance for work related cases and rental disputes supported by Legal Aid and Caxton Legal Centre. Our podiatrist service and our annual tax return services have also continued.

An ongoing challenge facing our Food Co-op remains sourcing reliable drivers/helpers to do the pick-up from Foodbank and SecondBite. We have attempted unsuccessfully to gain funding for an automatic van as most people no longer have manual licences and this limits our possible volunteers. The committee and I continue to explore all possibilities.

Our Community Development Programme has delivered festivals and ceremonial days providing vehicles for strengthening community pride and connection.

Our lease acquisition of the Annerley-Moorooka Senior Citizens' Hall (now, The Social Space) has established a permanent home for our Stitched Up social enterprise, with Javad Ragheb continuing his sewing/alteration/tailoring service. This service has widened to include the re-purposing of old clothes by skilful alteration and addition of embroidery and bling. The Social Space will also be used by our training groups and with the refurbishment of the kitchen we aim to provide a coffee shop staffed by paid and volunteer workers. The various spaces will also be available for rent by local community groups.

Our ongoing English classes and Citizenship classes, run by our tireless volunteer teacher Rainer Davies,

have continued to grow to the extent that space has become a real issue. It is hoped a second teaching space at Moorooka will help with this, however we will need at least a second volunteer teacher to make this work.

New Community Development programmes include the Watson Rd State School breakfast service. Our breakfasts have helped increase attendance across the school and have provided the students with high protein nourishment to start their school day. A big thank you to our partners at the Brisbane Lions AFC and BMI Group for assisting us with the costs.

The Centre is now hosting a weekly Indigenous Women's Group who are focused on improving their physical fitness and health. The group are working on developing a programme that increases their sense of wellbeing and increases self-esteem.

The recent opening of our NewAccess programme has been an exciting development, with the first referrals coming in at the time of compiling this report. The programme is free and offers 6 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy-based sessions with a NewAccess coach based at our Centre in Acacia Ridge. Ours is the first NewAccess programme nationwide to specifically target culturally and linguistically diverse communities, however we are also open to referrals from across the wider community.

My heart-felt thanks to Michelle Gadke who does a magnificent job driving our client services and community development programs and activities!

As Collette addressed in her report, our growth in programmes funded through the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative has been a source of great success this year. Once funding has been secured, we have been able to work with some really great training providers to deliver group-based training and some paid traineeships across a range of skill sets chosen to match available employment opportunities with the employment needs and aspirations of our community members. It has been tremendously fulfilling to see so many obtain ongoing work as a result.

Change and growth always brings excitement and challenges and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the management committee, volunteers and staff for their support, good humour and ability to embrace the up side of change throughout the year.

Given the rapid growth we have experienced in the past year, our focus in the coming year will be to consolidate and ensure that we continue to be responsive to our community.



Trish Cattermole
Director

Community Development

ARCSI's Community Development Program consists of a range of programs, services and events. These are led by our talented and tireless Client & Community Programs Manager, Michelle Gadke.

Our volunteers remain critical to the ongoing delivery of programs, activities and events across our entire centre. Our work is currently supported by around 25 active volunteers. Thank you so much! Our weekly English language and Citizenship classes supported by Rainer Davies remains a great example of this community spirit, and we view such support as a significant form of community investment into ARCSI and our work.

We also continue to host tertiary students on placement. We are proud to do our bit to support the development of our next generation of community sector workers, and are fortunate to reap the benefits of their energy, ideas, enthusiasm, and contributions across many of our programs and activities.



Pic: Alana (L) and Erin (R) worked hard across the Centre on their student placements earlier this year.

Our Multicultural Women's Group has provided a warm, welcoming and inclusive environment for women to come together and share food, information and stories.

We delivered a weekly playgroup this year, facilitated by ARCSI volunteers at the C&K Moorooka Community Kindergarten. We are grateful to C&K Management and Director Sally Willick for kindly offering us their space for this program.

Our Food Co-op continues to provide an important source of low-priced groceries to the community.

Dave Riley's Indigenous Art Workshops have become an anticipated regular school holiday activity, while our Anzac Day Service in Grenier Park once again received strong support from our local community, including community leaders.



Pic: Beautiful creations by Dave Riley were on display at Party in the Park this year.

Other significant events will be reported on separately.

Foundations to Thrive

We continue to work in partnership with Beacon Strategies on the development of 'Foundations to Thrive', our joint project that aims to address prenatal health needs in Acacia Ridge and surrounding suburbs.



Pic: Elliot Parkinson from Beacon Strategies presents their findings after conversations with mothers in Acacia Ridge and nearby areas.

The heart of ARCSI's service footprint is captured by the Rocklea-Acacia Ridge SA2 as defined by Queensland Statistical Areas. Our SA2 is marked by some of the worst outcomes for early childhood development state-wide against nearly every commonly used indicator.

A stream of research known as 'epigenetics' (alternatively, 'fetal programming' or 'Barker's Hypothesis') provides compelling evidence that early childhood experiences (including in utero) correlate against virtually every indicator of health and achievement across the lifespan.

But there's also a strong evidence-base for how this can be changed. The **Abecedarian Project** (a play on the letters ABCD) was a comprehensive early education program for young children at risk for developmental delays and school failure. The program operated at a single site between 1972 and 1985, in North Carolina, and underwent numerous assessments of its long-term effects on participants. With a combination of teaching, learning enrichment strategies, and enriched care giving in early childhood education settings, the longitudinal program showed that even children from backgrounds of extreme disadvantage could be protected from long-term harm and achieve levels of health, educational attainment, career success and so on comparable to the base-line population.

The study demonstrates that the future of any newborn should not be determined by their postcode. There is global research evidence that confirms diminishing returns on public finances invested in a person over the course of their lifetime. Put simply, money spent on supporting healthy prenatal and early childhood development reaps far greater returns than money invested at any later point in a person's lifespan. Prevention and early intervention is always better than the cure.

Beacon Strategies have worked hard this year to understand the needs, experiences, and aspirations of young mothers in our community. They recently presented their findings to an audience of service providers and other stakeholders at the Acacia Ridge Community Centre. Their research highlights

the importance of authentic sector wide collaboration if women are to be guaranteed access to the services they need at the right time and in the right setting.

We have reached a point where we all understand what needs to be done. Trish and the Management Committee continue to explore all possible funding options to support the next steps; namely the development of a service model that will take us closer again to delivering on this dream.

If you are interested to find out more or support this project in any way, please email Director@arcsi.org.au.

Emergency Relief

With funding from the Department of Social Services, our Emergency Relief (ER) program assisted over 1200 families with more than 3000 instances of emergency financial assistance in the last financial year. These families were from 25 suburbs across the Southside of Brisbane. These numbers represent a stark increase from the previous financial year as indicated in the following table:

ER Support	2015-16	2016-17	%Change
Number of families assisted	680+	1200+	+76.5%
Instances of assistance	1650+	3000+	+82%

This experience has aligned with some of our neighbouring ER providers in recent months and became the subject of an investigative feature piece by Southern Star journalist Andrew Dawson in May this year.

The following areas represent the top five areas of need for people accessing support through Emergency Relief at ARCSI:

- 1) Rent (and in some cases, mortgage) payments
- 2) Electricity Bills
- 3) Car registration
- 4) Food
- 5) Car loan repayments/other big ticket bills

Domestic and family violence remains another important factor that propels people (particularly women and their children) into financial crisis across our district.

We believe that Acacia Ridge and surrounding areas are being hit hard by many of the same factors affecting low income communities across Queensland and throughout Australia.

The rising cost of living is compounding pressure on households across our district, while large sections of our community find themselves in increasingly insecure forms of employment, with low job security, limited prospects of wage growth, and unpredictable hours leaving households extremely exposed to unexpected events or crises.

“What we’re seeing across the community are increasing numbers of people living on a knife edge,” said our Director, Trish Cattermole.

“They might be travelling ok today, but they’re only one expected bill, or a minor illness, or a small reduction in their work roster away from losing control over their finances and their lives.”

In the weeks leading up to Christmas last year, we provided emergency relief to around 10 families whose primary income earner had suddenly lost their casual employment. Christmas last year was a really difficult time for many families in our community.

In this context, the Emergency Relief program continues to offer a lifeline to families suffering financial hardship through the provision of financial aid, information and referrals.

Rather than promoting dependency, we are frequently reminded of the role this program plays in helping stabilise people’s situation such that their engagement in positive, productive activities remains uninterrupted. This in turn helps break cycles of poverty and dependency in the longer run. The provision of support to clients referred via our SQW program workers, for example, allowed their ongoing participation in these programs, and helped address barriers to accessing and

maintaining employment that ultimately led to training and employment success.

Food Co-Op

Our Food Co-Op was accessed 4000 times in the 2016-17 Financial Year.

This service continues to provide an important source of low-priced groceries to vulnerable members of our community.

We remain grateful for the support this program receives through our partnership with SecondBite and Foodbank.

The contributions made to this program on a daily basis by our tireless volunteers also deserves recognition. Thank you!

Outreach

The following outreach services operated from the Acacia Ridge & Districts Community Centre during the 2016-17 financial year:

- Southwest Brisbane Community Legal Centre, which provides legal advice on matters relating to Child Safety, Domestic Violence, and Family Law;
- QStars, the Queensland Statewide Tenancy Advice and Referral Service, continued their services from the Community Centre this year;
- Flexi Care operates a popular podiatry outreach service from the Community Centre;
- Centrelink’s outreach service continues to provide timely responses to our community members who are at risk of homelessness;
- Tax help was delivered from the Community Centre, with free tax returns available to people with an income less than \$50K in the 2015-16 Financial Year.

Stitched Up

From its humble 2013 beginnings in a tiny space at the Acacia Ridge Community Centre, Stitched Up now has its very own shop front where members of the public can engage its range of services,

including made-to-order clothing, unique off the rack pieces, alterations, and 'blinging'/upcycling.

Tailor-in-command, Javad Ragheb says Stitched Up's new home in The Social Space, Moorooka, provides a strong foundation for business growth and enhanced public exposure as the social enterprise enters its next phase of evolution.

Javad has worked hard over the past year to build a cache of upcycled items that will become stock for sale once Stitched Up opens its doors to the public. Its usual services of alterations, and made-to-order clothing will also continue. Javad hopes the enterprise will continue to offer community members the same sense of connection and purpose it has provided him since arriving in Australia as an asylum seeker five years ago.

"The further I have travelled down this path, the more I have come to realize the importance of communicating with others. I have also learned through Stitched Up the amount of good will that exists in our community – often people just don't know what to do with it, or how to connect with each other," Javad said.



Pic: ARCSI staff member Elizabeth Andrea models one of Javad's Stitched Up creations.

"But this program has attracted incredible generosity (in terms of fabric donations) and has brought hundreds of people from many different backgrounds together. It has provided the foundation for the delivery of informal training and accredited training programs opening pathways to employment and further study. It has given people more confidence, and access to a meaningful way to spend their time," he said.

The Social Space

Our second community centre in Moorooka opened its doors this year.

Based in the former Annerley-Moorooka Senior Citizens' Hall, The Social Space is now home to Stitched Up, and will soon provide the physical foundation for other social enterprise initiatives, including a "Community Kitchen" that will sell coffee, cakes and other treats to the general public.

The space will also house a variety of community education programs along with the delivery of some of ARCSI's SQW-funded training initiatives.

Outside of regular hours, the space will be available for hire as an ideal setting for other community events and activities.

As with so much of our work at ARCSI, the renovation of the hall to suit our own purposes has only been possible thanks to significant public and community support.

The refurbishment of the space was supported by a partnership with All Trades Queensland (ATQ) earlier this year, who helped bring on board 16 construction students training towards a Certificate I in Construction as part of the Queensland Government's Certificate 3 Guarantee initiative.

The partnership helped bolster the apprenticeship and employment prospects of ATQ's Certificate I students, while we received the benefits of the students' labour as they learned and applied their skills on the job. After an initial phase of induction and safety training, the students were immersed in an array of hands-on activities, including scaffolding, building a new internal wall, sound

proofing, concreting, paving, and painting the building's façade.

One of the 16 students taking part, Callum Gavin said the range of activities was an added bonus.

"Having the opportunity to try my hand at a few different trades in the one project has already helped me to work out where I want to be heading after I complete the certificate," Callum said.

ATQ General Manager Training, Mike Bareham, said the partnership allowed the students to work on a project to the benefit of the entire community.

He also said the variety of tasks helped ATQ to generate stronger apprenticeship employment outcomes for its course graduates.

"For young people especially, gaining a variety of trade experiences goes a long way towards helping them identify what they really enjoy doing the most, and we see in the longer run how this motivates young people towards apprenticeship and employment success," Mike said.

"It's just about gaining enough of a taste of different industry skills so that young people have a real understanding of what they're signing up for," he said.



Pic: A partnership with All Trades Queensland has helped prepare The Social Space for new beginnings.

Events

Community events remained an important part of our Community Development Program activities this year.

Moorooka Shares in Spirit of Community

Moorooka Laneway Festival 2017 was held on the 18th of March in the areas of Radburn Lane, Luxworth Place and Lyon Street.

It was a great success with over 30 local community organisations and local market holders represented as stall holders.

The crowd was entertained by 11 local musicians/bands throughout the day including the inaugural performance of the Moorooka Community Choir, an initiative of ARCSI and the Brisbane City Council.

Local businesses, including cafes and restaurants were very busy throughout the day and appreciated the increase in Saturday afternoon/evening trade.



Pic: The Moorooka Community Choir enjoyed a fantastic debut performance at the Moorooka Laneway festival.

Acacia Ridge Says Not Now, Not Ever to Domestic and Family Violence

The Acacia Ridge Community Centre helped unite Brisbane's Southside on 19 May in a strong stand against domestic and family violence.

Rallying under the name 'Acacia Ridge Says Not Now Not Ever', the event reinforced the message that domestic and family violence is unacceptable in our community. Information was also provided on where affected people can seek assistance.



Pic: Trish Cattermole with guest speakers at the event

The statistics surrounding domestic and family violence remain incredibly sobering. Each year, Queensland-based crisis support service DVConnect receives over 55,000 incoming calls relating to domestic violence, family violence and sexual assault. In 2013–14, more than 66,000 incidents of domestic violence and 17 homicides were reported to Queensland Police.



Pic: Inspector Joe Jaramazovic from Queensland Police Service helped carry our message to the community.

The fact remains that a woman in Australia is more likely to be killed in her own home by her male partner than anywhere else or by anyone else.

Although domestic violence cuts across all segments of our community, negative stigma surrounding reporting continues to limit many from seeking help, particularly women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Our event sought to empower women from all backgrounds to reach out for help when needed through raising awareness of the range of supports available.

The event formed part of Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month, a Queensland

Government initiative marked by state-wide events and activities each May.



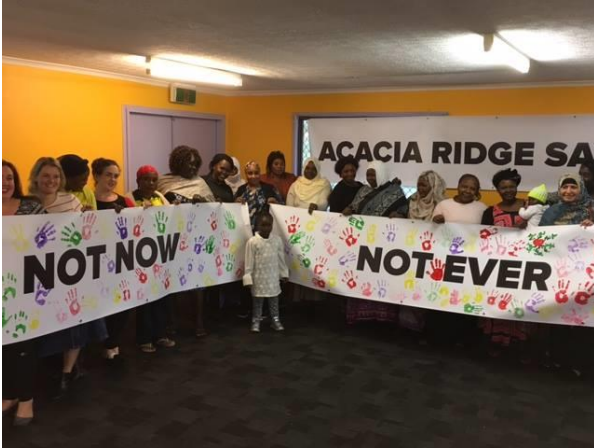
Pic: Michelle Gadke with Ambyr from the Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS)

We are particularly indebted to the line-up of guest speakers who took part in the event:

- Amber from Brisbane Rape and Incest Survivors Support Centre (BRISSC). Amber presented information on a new brochure developed by the Centre along with information on how women can access their services.
- Josie who gave in incredible personal account of her own fight to break the DV cycle against a backdrop of inter-generational domestic and sexual violence that has run through her family for generations.
- Ambyr from Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS) who provided vital information and encouragement to CALD women on how to access support.
- Beth Mohle, Secretary of the Nurses and Midwives Union. Beth showcased the commitment of her union to fight for positive reforms in line with the recommendations of the Special Taskforce. She also showcased her Union's commitment to their member base through training programs that help nurses and midwives recognize signs of DV in their patients when they encounter them.
- Senior Sgt. Ian Cameron (Acacia Ridge Police), who demonstrated the spirit of

community policing, reinforcing the message that the police are there to help.

- Freya (Micah Projects), who presented a strong case to women to access support when they need it.



Pic: Participants placed their handprint on a banner to share in our stand against Domestic and Family Violence.

Party in the Park Offers Something for All Ages

The Acacia Ridge community came together for a day of family fun and festivities in June for the annual Party in the Park, proudly presented by the Acacia Ridge Community Centre.

From rock & roll to blues, R&B, folk, hip-hop, and punk, the program of live entertainment had something for people of all musical persuasions.



Pic: The Presey Brothers put on a great show (Credit: Kat Hagenbach)

Mouth-watering delights from all corners of the globe were also available, including Ethiopian and Eritrean inspired flatbreads and stews, Persian food, Middle Eastern sweets, and many of the old festival staples including spring rolls, hot chips, coffee and ice cream.



Pic: Mulu from Arhibu Ethiopian and Eritrean Restaurant (Moorooka) catered at the event (Credit: Kat Hagenbach)

Supported by Multicultural Development Australia through the Migrant Youth Vision Project, a special youth program attracted large numbers of young people to the party this year, including a 3-on-3 half-court basketball competition, and a sub-program of information and presentations focussed on pathways into vocational training and employment for young people.

Above all, Party in the Park brought the community out of their homes and into the park for a day of fun in unity.



Pic: A basketball program attracted large numbers of young people to Party in the Park (Credit: Kat Hagenbach)

“Activity in our streets and parks is such an important part of healthy communities,” said Trish Cattermole.

“We all understand the fantastic health benefits that go along with getting outdoors, but there are terrific benefits to the community as well in terms of getting to know each other, and getting to understand each other’s backgrounds. Events like this really help to build trust in each other and to break down barriers.”

Employment & Training

ARCSI was proud to deliver a variety of training programs this year funded through the Queensland Government's Skilling Queensland for Work initiative.

A total of **129 funded places** were created across a mix of Work Skills Traineeships and Community Work Skills training programs.

At the time of writing, 75 participants have obtained a full vocational qualification and 49 have secured paid employment. Most participants continue to receive support through the post-participation phase of their respective programs, and ARCSI training staff continue to generate outcomes for participants on a weekly basis.

The built-in flexibility of the SQW programs has allowed us to tailor programs that leverage the existing strengths and skills of our community members while being responsive to emerging trends in the job market, both locally and further afield.

Wrap around support is an important component to our training and skills-building objective. This includes programs and activities that support the development of skills and resilience, that foster interpersonal and community connectedness, and that provide a safety net to individuals and families in times of crisis and distress. Our training support workers help connect participants to these additional programs when needed, helping ensure our participants are provided a supported training experience that enables them to overcome various barriers to vocational training on the road to employment.

Our community-based and employment-outcome focussed support is centred on the belief that respecting the self-determination and aspirations of our community members is what leads to sustainable employment success. This belief is always at the centre of our thoughts when applying for, developing, and delivering training programs.

Programs were delivered in partnership with a range of RTOs, not-for-profit community organisations and employers, who have provided invaluable opportunities to our participants to develop real-world skills through vocational placement and work experience placements that, in many instances, have led to ongoing employment outcomes.

In other cases, positive employment outcomes have been achieved by working directly alongside our clients, supporting their individual interests, career aspirations and personal circumstances.

Community Work Skills

The following Community Work Skills training programs were delivered this year:

Program	Number of Participants
MT01468 "Pathways to Community Services Work", Certificate II in Community Services Work and Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing)	24
MT01653 "Pathways to Working in Healthcare", Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing and Disability)	45

Work Skills Traineeships

The following Work Skills Traineeship programs were delivered this year:

Program	Number of Participants
MT01441 "Business Work Skills Traineeship", Certificate I in Business	12
MT01472 "Green Skills for Acacia Ridge", Certificate I in Conservation and Land Management	24
MT01829 "Freney Street Park Greening Project", Certificate I in Conservation and Land Management	24

Through our Work Skills Traineeship programs, a total of \$630,000 was paid to participants as wages during the 2016-2017 financial year, along with an additional \$56,000 in superannuation payments.

Partnerships

Partnership is the essence of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, helping position the development of real industry skills on a foundation of community networks and wrap around supports.

In delivering our community-based training initiatives, we partnered with the following Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in 2016-17:

- Help Training Institute
- Quest College
- Strive International Employment & Training
- Greening Australia Training.

We also partnered with a number of not-for-profit organisations who generously hosted our participants on vocational placement or as paid trainees.

Host employers for our Business Trainees included:

- Kyabra Community Association (Runcorn)
- MDA Ltd (Woolloongabba)
- Help Supply Chain Services (Acacia Ridge)
- St David's Neighbourhood Centre (Coopers Plains)
- Inala Youth Service
- Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre
- BUSY at Work (Springwood)
- Centacare (Darra).

Employers who hosted our students on Vocational Placements (Aged Care and Disability) included:

- Wesley Mission Sinnamon Village (Sinnamon Park)
- Riverview Gardens Aged Care Plus (Riverview)
- Bundaleer Lodge Nursing Home (North Ipswich)
- RSL Care (Waterford)
- Inala Respite Centre

- Ability Care (Browns Plains)
- Keystone Disability Services (Woodridge)
- Blue Care (Sunnybank Hills)
- ROPE (Scarborough)
- Algester Lodge Nursing Home.

We also hosted participants ourselves who undertook a range of work tasks for ARCSI.

We appreciate the support of other organisations who have donated their respective sites or industry expertise in the course of our programs this year.

Thank you to:

- Watson Road State School, Acacia Ridge
- Oxley Creek Catchment Association (OCCA)
- Brisbane City Council
- Jimboomba Community Garden.

Employment Good News Stories

ARCSI Wins at Queensland Training Awards!



Pic: ARCSI Vice President, Jo Justo and President, Colette Crossley pictured at the Queensland Training Awards, Metropolitan Region finals.

We were delighted this year to be named as a finalist in the inaugural Community Training Initiative of the Year award as part of the Queensland Training Awards (Metropolitan Region).

We were even more delighted to win the big award on the night!



Pic: L-R, Raelee Vearing, Sebastian Ross-Hagebaum, Chris Austin and Sudhara Anandakumar pictured with the award.

Winning the Metropolitan region sees us catapulted into the 2017 Queensland Training Awards state finals on 1 September.

While trophies and award nights are not our driving motivation, we would be kidding ourselves if we were to pretend it was not a big thrill and a great honour. It was! Thank you to the Department of Education and Training for celebrating the importance of the training sector towards the development of our economy and society in Queensland.

Never Too Late to Learn New Skills – Leanne Pugh

Forest Lake job-seeker, Leanne Pugh is proof that it is never too late to reskill and embark on a new career adventure.

Despite decades of experience as a draftsman in the mining sector, Leanne recently faced the gloomy prospect of securing reliable employment in a stagnating industry.

“The truth is, the mining sector – including coal seam and liquid gas, where I worked – has never fully recovered from its earlier decline. Jobs have been fewer to come by with a lot more applicants competing,” Leanne said.

“With all my career experience invested in quite a particular industry, starting over again at my age was a really daunting prospect.”

Leanne’s experience is shared by many Australians who face redundancy and even the possibility of long-term unemployment due to changes in technology, commodity demand, or their personal

circumstances. But ARCSI has helped Leanne and others gear up for a new career in business administration with support from the Queensland Government’s *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative.

Leanne was one of seven local job-seekers who graduated from the 16-week full-time Business Work Skills Traineeship program, which put them through the paces of job readiness training, intensive work experience in partnering work places, and accredited training towards a Certificate I in Business.

“Business administration was the perfect option for me. I wanted to find a new career path that would still benefit from my existing skills in the mining sector. My computer skills, communication skills and overall professionalism mean there is plenty of transfer and cross-over – I’m not starting over from scratch.”

“I think the maturity factor also helps,” said Leanne, who is in her mid-forties, and now has her sights set on a new career in medical administration.

Our Director, Trish Cattermole said that Leanne’s circumstances are experienced by a wide range of people at one point or another during the course of their careers.

“Circumstances change. Industries change, people’s lives change, society’s tastes and preferences change. It’s very satisfying to work in partnership with the Queensland Government to identify growing sectors in our economy, and to help job-seekers develop the skills needed to break into the workforce,” Trish said.

Greening Success Story – Ikuko Makita

Now employed as a propagator with Daly’s Native Plants, Japanese native Ikuko (Iko) Makita is living a long-held dream. The realization of this dream followed participation in a Conservation and Land Management Traineeship in 2016/17, delivered by ARCSI in partnership with Greening Australia and the Oxley Creek Catchment Association (OCCA).

Upon migrating to Australia five years ago, one of the first things to catch her eye was the beauty of Australian native plants.

“When I lived in Tokyo, it was hard to find nature anywhere. I mean, living in Tokyo, you can’t get out into nature without taking a long weekend, and spending hours trying to escape from the city. Here in Australia, nature is everywhere you look,” said Iko.

As a single mother, Iko worked in various entry-level jobs, including, for a while, as a cleaner, but said that she had not found anything she would regard as a long-term career pathway. Things changed when she came across ARCSI’s “Green Skills for Acacia Ridge” traineeship program.

“I knew this was the right chance for me at the right time. I still love the nature here, and wanted to work in a job where I can play a part in protecting it.”

Iko was a star performer throughout the program, and on graduation, quickly landed a trial with the Wishart-based nursery where she now works full-time.

“When I started there, I think they looked at me and weren’t sure if I would stick around for long. But I love it. Later on they asked me where I was planning to be in a few years, and I said I’d prefer to be in the same place.”

“Right now, I’m still learning to be a propagator. In the future, my dream is to be a proper propagator,” Iko laughs.

“I love starting off with a seed, and then a baby plant, and watching that plant grow into a huge tree,” she said.



Pic: Ikuko Makita was one of numerous ARCSI trainees who worked on conservation and land management projects this year.

[Traineeship Rekindles Good Work Habits – John Batibasaga](#)

Before participating in one of the Green Skills Traineeship projects delivered by ARCSI, I had been forced into unemployment for around two years as caring responsibilities became a more important priority.

One of the first positive impacts that I felt as I started to participate in the project was reestablishing some basic routines in my life again. Even though I was older than many of the participants and had a lengthy history of employment behind me, I found that the period of forced unemployment meant I had lost some of the basic life habits required in pretty much any job. For example, getting up at a particular time each day, and arriving at a particular location at a given time to start work. I can imagine that the work-like rules and conditions that structured this project had an especially strong impact on the basic habits of some of the participants with very little past employment, or those who had been long-term unemployed.

An unexpected plus was the diversity of the student group, including people from different cultures, but perhaps more importantly, the wide range of ages of the participants. I found working with some of the younger people to be a really positive experience, especially those who lacked confidence and had very limited education and work experience. It meant that I strived to be a positive influence wherever I could, and I think myself and a couple of the other older hands helped to ground

some of the younger people and keep them on track. Likewise, some of the other older participants had a wealth of knowledge that they were able to pass on to me, so it was a great experience all round.

Another good aspect of the project was just the experience of getting to work in the bush. I'm sure that many people who sign up to projects like this are still really uncertain what they want to do with their lives. For me, I found the hands on experience working on a real conservation project provided the reassurance that this was indeed something I enjoyed doing and could see myself pursuing as a new career. I came away with a much greater appreciation of what's involved, and even of what green spaces and green corridors do for our ecosystem, for the local community, and our wider society. I found such lessons to be highly motivating.

ARCSI's staff were incredibly supportive throughout the project. I think they had the perfect mix of workers to support everyone to get the most out of the experience, and to overcome hurdles on the way to graduating successfully. I've seen similar projects where large numbers of people have dropped out by the end. Nearly everybody completed this project which I believe is a credit the ARCSI team and reflects their great work engaging participants with all kinds of life stories and personal circumstances.

On completing the project, I received great support with my application for jobs, and succeeded in gaining employment with Pisces, a wholesale aquarium nursery that supplies water plants to both businesses and the general public. While I remain determined to gain employment in conservation work in the longer run, I see my current job as a fantastic stepping stone, and continue to learn more about my new industry with each day.

I am very much grateful to ARCSI for these experiences!



Pic: Jimboomba Community Garden is one of several sites to benefit from the labour and new skills of ARCSI trainees this year.

[New Year, New Career for Acacia Ridge Aged Care Graduate - Sam Wijayarathna](#)

Fifteen Acacia Ridge locals rang in the New Year with new careers when they graduated with certificates in Aged Care in December 2016.

Having migrated to Australia from Sri Lanka two years ago, 46-year-old Sam Wijayarathna was one of the success stories. His wife a PhD candidate at QUT, the former journalist, teacher and human resources manager focussed first on improving his English and then on identifying an occupation that sits comfortably alongside his existing values. After completing the program, he now adds community-based age care to his career highlights.

"It has been a really good program. I love to help others, and it's a very good feeling doing the job. In my culture, we believe that helping others will bring good things, and bring positive returns back to us. Helping senior citizens is a very good thing to do, and for those of us from different countries, it even helps us to feel closer to our own parents," said Mr Wijayarathna.

Sam's vocational placement paved the way to real employment with Co.As.It Community Services, allowing him to put his newfound knowledge into practice while also reinforcing the human aspect of the work.

"Especially supporting people with dementia, there are three things that stand out as the most important. The first is empathy, the second is empathy, and the third most important thing is empathy," he said.

But Sam said the work readiness training of the program delivered by the Acacia Ridge Community Centre also played a big part in gearing him up for his first Australian job.

“When you migrate to Australia, it’s a different environment because Australian culture is different. When we’re looking for work, it can be very difficult because we have experience of something in our country or our culture, but we might not understand the culture here. I think it’s very important for all people here to understand each other.”

“Studying at Acacia Ridge, the staff were very helpful to us to find jobs because they enhance our knowledge of the culture here, how to apply for jobs, how to write resumes and cover letters, and how to prepare for interviews. This knowledge is very important to people migrating to Australia. They’re doing a very big job. I came here wanting to contribute to the society, and I think it’s great that this program is here to support migrants who are coming to Australia, because they have lots of experience and new thoughts and skills to contribute. Australian culture is a multicultural culture,” he said.

[Acacia Ridge Trainees Breathe New Life into Creek Catchment](#)

Trainees from Acacia Ridge Community Centre along with volunteers from Oxley Creek Catchment Association (OCCA) and local business Rockpress contributed to restoration activities in the Acacia Ridge reaches of Oxley Creek at a volunteer tree planting day.

Phil Gunasekara from OCCA says their organisation is about building awareness and partnerships in the community so that everyone becomes a custodian of our precious waterways.

“The work OCCA does as a group has many different facets,” said Phil.

OCCA’s students and volunteers monitor water quality, undertake surveys of plant life and carry out much needed hands-on restoration work, including removal of noxious weeds and planting

native trees and shrubs, to help provide improved habitats for plants and animals alike.

“Healthy vegetation acts as a natural filtration system,” he said.

Through the Queensland Government’s *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative, the Acacia Ridge Community Centre partnered with OCCA to support a group of 15 jobseekers in a Work Skills Traineeship program where they undertook a variety of conservation and rehabilitation work in local public green spaces. On program completion, participants graduated with a Certificate I qualification in Conservation and Land Management.

Trish Cattermole said she believes the initiative was helping create real employment opportunities for local jobseekers.

“Our trainees are representative of Acacia Ridge’s cultural diversity. It’s been especially encouraging to see the number of women involved in our conservation and land management programs. What the trainees all share in common is a remarkable work ethic, and the drive to translate their newfound skills into meaningful employment,” Trish said.

Partners and Supporters

We would not be able to deliver the range of programs, activities and events that we do without the support of many partnering business, organisations and community leaders who assist our work in a variety of ways. We are deeply grateful for the support you continue to provide. In alphabetical order:

- All Trades Queensland
- Archerfield Airport
- Beacon Strategies
- Bendigo Bank (Acacia Ridge Community Branch)
- *beyondblue*
- Brisbane City Council
- Brisbane Lions Australian Rules Football Club
- Brisbane Racing Club
- Brisbane South Public Health Network
- Centacare
- Centrelink
- C&K Moorooka Community Kindergarten
- Cr Angela Owns (Calamvale Ward)
- Cr Steve Griffiths (Moorooka Ward)
- Dave Riley (Community artist)
- Department of Communities (Queensland)
- Department of Education and Training (Queensland)
- Department of Social Services (Commonwealth)
- Foodbank
- Forest Lake Lodge
- Graham Perrett MP (Federal Member for Moreton)
- Greening Australia
- HELP Enterprises
- Jimboomba Community Garden
- Kyabra Community Association
- Leeanne Enoch MP (State Member for Algester)
- Mark Bailey MP (State Member for Yeerongpilly)
- Multicultural Development Australia
- Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Primary School
- Oxley Creek Catchment Association (OCCA)
- Pathfinder Aviation
- Peter Russo MP (State Member for Sunnybank)
- SecondBite
- Strategix Training Group
- Strive International Employment and Training
- United Way
- Watson Road State School

Financial Report

Please refer to the attached Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2017 for details of ARCSI's financial position.