



belong

community • people • opportunity

Our Year in Review

Annual Report
2017-2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

belong holds the deepest respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people of this country, and we acknowledge that the prosperity of modern day Australia is built on lands stolen, never ceded.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have survived and continue to endure the traumas of historical and systemic injustices on their lands and people.

Yet we celebrate the world's longest surviving cultures - testament to systems of belief and technological sophistication that supported the survival of more than 250 clans or 'nations' across the enormous range of environments that comprise this continent.

We also honour the incredible resilience of our nation's first people, and their often under-celebrated contributions to our nation's economic, social and cultural development.

We are proud that our Acacia Ridge heartland boasts one of South East Queensland's strongest Indigenous communities, and we are grateful for everything that they teach us.

We are proud of the achievements, courage and resilience of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we rub shoulders with every day.

We are proud to be headquartered in a Queensland state electorate led by the first Indigenous woman to be elected to Queensland parliament.

We aim to tread gently on these lands, to listen to the wisdom of our elders, and to do what we can to help bridge the gap and contribute to the preservation of culture and lingo.

We pay our deepest respect to the Jagera people on whose land we are privileged to work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

Images courtesy of Acacia Ridge artist, David Riley

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From the President

Life in a neighbourhood centre and working across a diverse a community as we do at **belong** means not too many things ever remain the same.

Over the last year the Acacia Ridge Support Inc. has transformed into **belong**. A number of our senior staff have moved to new areas of work, the programs and funding we attract have grown and diversified, and the work of the **belong** Committee has evolved.

Whilst our name has changed, the one thing that has remained the same since the inception of the neighbourhood centre is our commitment to our local community, delivering services and cultivating networks across the Southside of Brisbane.

As a Committee, it is our role to provide governance and direction for the organisation. To do this we hold our vision which is to lead in creating community strength, resilience, opportunities and partnerships as the foundation for our work.

With the many changes the organisation has faced over the last year we have learnt as a Committee to be flexible and ready. We believe this past year has been very successful. One of the key reasons for this is the members of the Committee, their continuing support of the organisation and their willingness to get involved in their local community. Colette Crossley is a tremendous example of just such a community member. Colette is the immediate past President of ARCSI handing over the Committee in such fine shape. Colette has and

continues to undertake many roles in the organisation including Secretary of the Committee and Citizenship Educator. Colette, we thank you for your service to **belong** and hope we will be able to share your passion, skill and commitment for many years to come.

We have also seen this year a change in our staffing. Michelle Gadke, Sebastian Ross-Hagebaum and Chris Austin have all moved to new roles or retirement. The Committee thanks them for their service and wishes all the very best for their futures. We note in particular that for Sebastian his time with **belong** has included significant time and energy as a previous employee, committee member (President) prior to taking on the development of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work role which included taking **belong** on an award-winning journey.

As a result of these changes we have also seen a number of new faces joining the staff. **belong** Director Trish Cattermole has continued to manage these changes with her usual aplomb! A number of new programs and partnerships have resulted in many new faces through the corridors of both the Social Space and the Neighbourhood Centre. To meet the expectations of our many communities, working partners, the Committee, governments and local councils, the Director needs to have exceptional abilities. We are very fortunate to have Trish as our Director, enabling our vision and values to always be at the fore.

The 2017 - 2018 **belong** Committee comprises of the President - Jo Justo, Vice President - Annamarie Newton, Secretary - Colette Crossley, Treasurer Rodolfo Rodriquez and general members Hadi Karimi and Julie-Ann Campbell. To each member of the Committee I thank them for their service and participation in helping to make **belong** the great organisation that it is.

Whilst our dedicated staff keep the flag flying, it is our volunteers who are the active heart of our organisation. To all of our volunteers we thank you for your service. We have experienced the learning that to be a volunteer with **belong** means different things for different people but you can be guaranteed that volunteering at **belong** brings a wealth of experiences, friendships and opportunities.

If you are interested in joining the Committee or volunteering at **belong** we would be more than happy to discuss how you can assist in sharing our values and visions with our community.

Jo Justo (President)

From the Director



It is with pleasure I provide the report for the past financial year.

Last year's report ended with my writing that *"given the size and quick growth in the past year our focus on the coming year will be to consolidate and ensure that we continue to be responsive to our community"*.

In large this has been achieved with programme and service expansion now consolidated within the organisation and being delivered within our framework of 'no wrong door'. The expansion of programmes and services has enabled **belong** to deliver wrap around services for community members.

The past financial year saw **belong** being an active member of the Community Impact Collaborative, a working group of seven neighbourhood centres on the Southside of Brisbane. This work has resulted in the development of a programme logic for neighbourhood centres and a growing awareness amongst other agencies and government funders regarding the high standard of professionalism within the neighbourhood centre network. This work continues and supports the establishment of services in place and responsiveness to local community.

Neighbourhood Centres play a vital role in supporting all community members including those most vulnerable. The deep connections that Neighbourhood Centres have with those in their communities result in services that quickly respond to emerging issues, providing real front-line assistance and support.

belong is proud of its ability to shift and move quickly as community needs and aspiration change. This ability and responsibility also comes with challenges. For us here at **belong**, the greatest challenge has been to respond to the basic needs of those on benefits and those who can be described as the 'working poor'.

Food is the most basic human need for every person. Here at **belong**, in the past twelve months, we have seen a 21% increase in the number of community members seeking assistance to feed themselves and their families. Families who have been known to the centre for years and who have given so much to the community are now struggling to make ends meet, despite their working, despite extraordinary budgeting ability, despite their aspiration of being able to put food on the table at each meal time.

The impact of insecure work, no rise in pensions or Newstart payments, and the rising cost of living are creating circumstances of dire poverty. With poverty comes a wide range of issues, including health, housing and education.

Food security is at a crisis point in our community. **belong** is responding to this crisis by seeking partnerships and increasingly putting our scarce resources into developing solutions. I would like to thank all the volunteers who help stock and replenish our shelves four days a week and who assist those in need with politeness and genuine respect.

I would also like to thank all staff, but particularly Margo and Trish on our front desk for their compassion and professionalism in working with the increasing number of community members at our reception desk.

Mention must be made here of the great work that Sebastian Ross-Hagebaum did in establishing the Skilling Queenslanders for Work programme for **belong**. Sebastian established processes and mechanisms to deliver high quality training services to community members, and developed strong and lasting relationships with our partnering organisations and employers. Sebastian has been associated with **belong** for 9 years and has now left to take on further challenges. We wish him all the best.

The upcoming year will focus on continuing to provide food security to those in need, establishing an early intervention service for children at risk, and activating the Social Space at Moorooka..

Trish Cattermole (Director)

Leadership and Community Engagement



belong exercises its leadership by listening and responding to the aspirations and issues of Brisbane's Southside community, and by working in partnership with communities, services, businesses, civil society, and all levels of government to deliver on these needs.

Various initiatives were launched this year in direct response to community voices, addressing issues such as food insecurity, suicide prevention, domestic violence prevention, democratic participation, and economic inclusion.

belong has continued to collaborate with other Neighbourhood Centres on the Southside of Brisbane in a bid to raise the profile of these vital services, and to reinforce the wider investment value of their community engagement and service delivery. A program logic has now been developed that clearly articulates how Neighbourhood Centres work, and that demonstrates their positive impacts on all facets of community life.

Food for Thought

As early as 6:30am from Monday to Thursday each week, financially vulnerable Southside residents commence gathering outside our Food Cooperative at the Acacia Ridge Community Centre.

The service opens its doors to the community at 9:30am, and five people at a time are granted access based on their order of arrival.

They now arrive so early as experience has taught them what will shortly unfold. Demand for the service is now so great that supplies are stripped bare within an hour of opening. To arrive later on is to risk leaving empty handed, and to face difficult compromises in the allocation of scarce financial resources. People may forego vital medicines in order to put food on the table. Or go hungry in order to purchase vital medicines.

The community members who access this support defy the popular stereotypes. In 2017-2018, we witnessed a new trend towards servicing people who indeed hold down jobs, but who still struggle to make ends meet. **The Working Poor** in our community are the product of a new breed of employment arrangements that we believe must be challenged and changed. Their work is defined by transience, unreliability, and short-term or seasonal contracts. Coupled with the absence of workplace entitlements, ever increasing costs of living, and general stagnation in wages growth, you have a recipe for the perfect storm. You have hard-working Southside residents lining up outside the Acacia Ridge Food Cooperative at 7am for food.

We remain grateful to the support provided to this service from agencies such as SecondBite and Foodbank, however, we are already at the limits of what they can provide to us.

Earlier this year, we raised these concerns with Southside politicians from all levels of government with the view to mobilising resources and raising funds to help address these critical food shortages. The response has been overwhelming, and we are particularly grateful to Leeanne Enoch MP (State Member for Algester) who recently orchestrated a large event that raised significant funds to address this situation. This was a tremendous outcome.

While these resources will play a significant role in helping alleviate current pressures on community members and on the delivery of this service, we know that a lot more work needs to be done to address the root causes.

We will continue to do everything we can to have these stories heard, and to advocate for a fair go for all workers, and a stronger income safety net for those in our community who need it.

belong is now open to donations from anyone who wishes to strengthen the food security of financially vulnerable residents in our community. Please visit www.belong.org.au/donate



Kathryn's Story.....

The Perkins* family (names altered) are a striking example of the challenges faced by working families caught up in the throes of ongoing job insecurity.

Kathryn works 25 hours a week as a teacher-aide for students at a Southside primary school while her husband, Dean, has worked as a contract labourer for nearly twenty years. Together they have raised six children, the youngest 8 years old.

While Kathryn's work provides a reliable source of income for the family, the transient nature of Dean's work leaves the family constantly exposed to financial pressure that has seen Kathryn access food assistance several times this year to support her family.

"The thought I get every time I go to the Food Coop is, 'Why should I still have to come here? I work! We're a working family, but sometimes that's still not enough to get by.' Just when you think you're moving forwards, something happens and you realise you've moved nowhere," said Kathryn.

"Everything in the construction industry goes from project to project, so Dean's income is never consistent. The projects he works on are often a long way from here too, so plenty of money gets burned up just getting there and back each day. The last gig he had was out in Pinkenba.

"When he's between jobs, it often takes up to a month of applications for the next job to come. When he gets the next project, he's working for a while until the work dries up. Then the cycle starts over again.

"So this makes it impossible for us to ever save any money. When his projects end up, Dean *could* apply to Centrelink to help get us through to his next job. But the thing is that the approval time for Centrelink applications takes weeks before it even begins.....



....Kathryn's Story

"We just have to struggle our way through to his next job.

"On the good weeks when my salary lands, we have breathing space for a few days, but by the second week it's all gone. Most of my salary immediately goes towards covering rent and bills. The rest I put into buying as much food and groceries as I can. But often it's not enough.

"Sometimes I have to get loans; sometimes from pay-day lenders, and other times from family. It just makes things that much tighter the next time around. I end up in situations where I'm constantly robbing Peter to pay Paul. My family say things like, 'You work! Why are you asking us for money?' It's a big kick in the teeth for our morale.

"I think for Dean, it leaves him feeling like he has failed his family. It's easy for me to say to him things like, 'Don't worry, we'll be alright.' But I know he still feels the same way. I never want him to feel like these situations are he's fault, because they're not! But I know it's hard for him to shake that feeling.

"It just leaves us feeling like we're travelling one step forward, then ten steps backwards. And there's no way out. We should live in a community where people have security in their employment. Because the reality is that we can't just say to our landlord, 'Oh, sorry, we don't have the money to pay you this week.' If we don't pay our rent, the kids and us are out.

It's just not fair to anyone."

Suicide Prevention Group

Our engagement with Elders and other concerned residents has revealed the tragic toll that suicide continues to take on countless families and individuals in the Acacia Ridge district.

Earlier this year, we convened a Suicide Prevention Working Group that has brought the community together to build our understanding of the underlying issues, and to generate ideas for change.

To date, this working group has provided valuable input to the Brisbane South Public Health Network's consultative process that aims to reduce suicide across Brisbane's Southside.



Members of belong's suicide prevention group at the Acacia Ridge Community Centre.

Domestic Violence Prevention



In May this year, we were delighted to join with Snr Sergeant Ian Cameron and other officers from Acacia Ridge and Calamvale police stations to raise community awareness about domestic and family violence and to send a clear message that DV has no place in the Acacia Ridge community.

Senior Sergeant Cameron acknowledged the wonderful yet unseen work being done behind the scenes by **belong**, while Trish Cattermole spoke about the need for all of us to speak up and out about domestic violence.

Each May, Queensland marks Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month under the call of “Not Now, Not Ever”. We look forward to continuing our work with Southside police stations around this vital issue.

Breaking Down Barriers

Our community development and community education work continues to target barriers to access, participation, and social and economic inclusion that commonly affect Southside residents, including many with a history of forced migration. The following projects were launched and/or delivered in 2017-18:

Creating Connections Through Story

Funded by the Queensland Government through its *We are Queensland* grants program, the project engaged a group of 15 Southside women from diverse backgrounds in a journey of collaborative story-telling, facilitated across a series of workshops, and culminating in a performative showcase event held at The Social Space in Moorooka. A key outcome of the project was the women reaching a shared sense of having come from across the water, and gaining a deeper appreciation of their shared humanity. Many of the women remain friends well beyond completion of the project. The project also produced the women’s shared story in a booklet, and a video capturing highlights from the performance showcase.

Your Health Guides

belong has recently entered a partnership with Inala Primary Care to co-deliver a program addressing the Health Systems Literacy of target CALD communities in Brisbane’s South. The program is currently recruiting *Community Health Champions* who will be trained in delivering information on Health Systems Literacy to their respective communities across a range of events in 2019.

Breaking Bread and Barriers

This program comprises a series of community meal events that will connect 8 cultural communities with representatives from mainstream services, associations, and other organisations for the purpose of information sharing and cultural exchange. Our engagement of speakers is a direct response to areas of ongoing exclusion identified by each participating community. Breaking Bread and Barriers is funded by the Queensland Government through its *Celebrating Multicultural Queensland* grants program.

belong Events: Our A-Z Guide!

We hosted a wide range of events this year in celebration of place, people, community, culture, and history. In a region that continues to undergo rapid demographic change, our events helped unite Brisbane's diverse Southside community in recognition of the fundamental things we share in common.

ANZAC Day

Our annual commemorative service was held in Grenier Park, Acacia Ridge this year in partnership with the Sunnybank RSL Sub-Branch. Acacia Ridge is deeply connected to Australia's service history, originally developed as a source of affordable housing for returned service men and women. The event encourages people from all backgrounds to gather in acknowledgement of the immense sacrifices made by countless Australian defence personnel.

"Lest we forget"

belong Short Film Festival

Step aside, Cannes, there's a new kid in town! March 2018 marked the first of our three annual Short Film Festivals funded by the Brisbane City Council's Festivals program. A full house at The Social Space enjoyed an incredible showcase of short films celebrating Australia's diversity. We look forward to bigger and better things in 2019, with the addition of a special matinee program that will present short films submitted by young people in our community as part of a short film competition. Keep your eyes on our Facebook page for more to come!

NAIDOC Week Art with David Riley

We were proud to support our dear friend and resident artist, David Riley this year when he hosted his first ever solo art exhibition for NAIDOC Week 2018.

The exhibition was a tremendous success, attracting around 200 visitors across the day, and generating numerous sales for Dave. Dave has also earned himself an additional residency this year at the Urban Paradise Gallery in Woolloongabba. Congratulations Dave, and we look forward to many more successful exhibitions to come!



Dave Riley at Urban Paradise Gallery in Woolloongabba.

Party in the Park

Party in the Park remains an anticipated event in Acacia Ridge, attracting large numbers of people from the local community. While this year's party was cut short by a torrential downpour at around 2pm, we fortunately had already enjoyed plenty of great entertainment, food, and celebrating the spirit of Acacia Ridge.

Remembrance Day

Remembrance Day was used as an opportunity to engage our local school communities in Acacia Ridge to help ensure the memory of those who have died in the line of duty is transferred to the next generation. Thank you to all the school communities who participated in this service.

World Village Market

Our World Village Market at The Social Space was launched in response to aspirations expressed by members of the Persian community who wished to share elements of their culture with the wider Australian community, and to explore opportunities for small business leveraging their existing cultural skills and knowledge. The market has since grown to incorporate a number of stallholders from the Latin American community and other backgrounds. The format for the market will change in January 2019 to an evening twilight event to be hosted once every month.

Student Success

belong continued to play its part this year mentoring the next generation of community sector professionals by providing placement opportunities for students as part of their tertiary study requirements. Check out Susan South's story below!



Darren, pictured with Yara (right) and Nagla (left) on placement at belong in 2017.

A Student's Experience at belong (by Susan South)

belong is my final placement for the completion of a four-year social work degree. After four years of constant theory it can be very difficult to mesh the theory into practice. University has a way of teaching how the world "should" be and not necessarily addressing what is. Given this, a lot of students can be disappointed with their placement positions. I was not, I was happy to see upon arrival on my first morning community members visiting the centre. When you think "community centre", it is not always a given you will encounter community members - some centres hold very tightly to who they regard as clients, and I was very excited to see that this centre looked like the focus was on the client and the feel of the centre was "community" in my favourite form - the people (Continued on next page).

In the days that followed, I was fortunate to see an interaction that managed to merge university knowledge into practice. A community member was using one of the phones in the front office and he was very agitated and losing control of his temper. Trish, the Director, went straight to the door and at this point I thought sparks were going to fly, however what she did pulled all my theoretical knowledge into practice perspective. Trish asked the man if he was on the phone with Centrelink. What that question did was immediately put the man at ease, and let him share his frustration at what was a long, humiliating conversation with a system that was in-different to his suffering.

In that exchange, I saw an example of strength-based practice, perfect concise interpersonal skills being used, and as time went on, I understood the centre uses anti-oppressive practice, human rights principles and a true and real commitment to refugees and asylum seekers, and other marginalised communities. The centre really does practice from a community model. The suicide prevention group were asked to participate in a journey mapping afternoon, led by professionals to take the issues, ideas/solutions and stories of the group to a policy platform.

Another common thread of this kind of work is seeing people who have been referred to **belong** after being referred from agency to agency before finally reaching us. One couple had this experience, needing what I would consider a very small amount of money. They had been all over the place, and were distressed and 'over it' by the time they got to **belong**. Trish carefully listened to their story and gave the assistance required. The core values for community work in general reflect a preference for a society based on co-operation and solidarity rather than on individualism and competition and that is certainly the case at **belong**.

I have come to see what structural disadvantage looks like people - the man who lost his job and lives in his car, the lady whose husband went to Sydney for work and did not come back. I have learned that in Australia, all it takes is one life event and the consequences can be so devastating that it is nearly impossible to come back from.

The staff at **belong** have assisted me to become the best I can be. They sought my input and gave me a voice. In the four months at **belong**, I have made friends with my colleagues and have had a shift in the way I perceive myself and my practice. These unique and amazing people have given me a confidence in myself and my practice ability that wasn't there before. I have had experiences at **belong** that I will carry with me throughout my professional career.

Picture: Susan (left) established a women's gardening group during her placement.



Financial Inclusion



Promoting the Financial Inclusion of people in our community remained a core objective of belong in 2017-2018. We delivered on this objective by working in partnership with individuals, communities, businesses, training organisations, service providers and other stakeholders to help achieve successful and sustainable economic participation and financial inclusion outcomes for all community members.

We also helped to uphold the safety, security and dignity of some of Brisbane's most socially and financially vulnerable people through our ongoing delivery of Emergency Relief services on behalf of the Department of Social Services, and through the continued operation of our Food Co-operative based at the Acacia Ridge Community Centre.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work

Training transforms lives!

belong was proud to build on its community-based training support in 2017-18, delivering a total of **5 Community Work Skills programs** and **4 Work Skills Traineeship programs** that engaged a total of 178 job-seekers prepared to take the leap to improve their career prospects. Several of these projects remain ongoing and final outcomes are yet to be determined, but to date these programs have delivered a total of:

- 61 x Paid Employment Outcomes
- 128 x Full Qualifications
- 51 x Statements of Attainment (for partial qualifications)
- 14 x Participants into Further Training



178
TRAINING
PLACES
CREATED



61 EMPLOYMENT
OUTCOMES FOR
DISADVANTAGED
JOB SEEKERS



128
INDUSTRY
CERTS
AWARDED

Training Programs

The following training programs were delivered in the 2017-18 financial year. As always, we remain grateful to the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training for their continued support of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, and providing us with these opportunities.

Community Work Skills programs

- Diversity in Education (Cert III in Education Support)
- Engineering Pathways (Cert II in Engineering Pathways)
- Construction Skills Trades Tester (Cert II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways)
- Individual Support (Cert III in Individual Support)
- Electrotechnology (Cert II in Electrotechnology)

Work Skills Traineeships

- Mortimer Road Park Traineeship (Cert I in Construction)
- Greening Jimboomba Traineeship (Cert I in Conservation and Land Management)
- Scenic Rim Community Recover Traineeship (Cert I in Conservation and Land Management)
- Business Administration Skills Traineeship (Certificate I in Business Administration).

These community-based training initiatives were achieved with the support of many partners. While there are too many to name individually, we are grateful to:

- the various Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) who partnered with us in the delivery of accredited training
- organisations and individuals who shared with us their industry expertise and sites, allowing participants to develop skills on real world projects
- the many work places that have hosted our participants on Vocational Placement or as Trainees.



Conservation and Land Management trainees, Denis Nizeyimana and Yvonne Inarukundo.



Graduations day! Engineering Pathways participant, Sean Pring at left

Emi's Story: Diversity in Education program



Emi Utsumi (centre), with Sudhara Anandakumar (belong) and Jeni Anderson (Strategix)

belong's Diversity in Education Program proved the perfect fit for Emi Utsumi last year.

Emi was one of 33 people to participate in our Diversity in Education Program in 2017-18; a Teacher Aide training course for learners from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

"I've been living life as a full-time mum ever since my eldest child was born," said Emi of her life before participation in the program.

"My youngest child started Prep this year, meaning that I could finally work again. I looked everywhere, but it was very hard to find a job where I could still drop my kids off to school and pick them up at the end of the school day. Instead, I started volunteering at my children's school (Sunnybank Hills State School) two days a week, supporting children in the classroom.

One of the teacher aides said to me, 'You're really great at this. Why don't you consider becoming a teacher aide?' I agreed and started looking for opportunities. A friend then told me about the program with **belong** and Strategix. (Continued on next page)

....Emi's Story

I went to their information session, where I met Sudhara from **belong** and my trainer Scott at Strategix. I learned that the course hours allowed me to leave at 2:30pm in time to pick up my kids each day. This was the flexibility I needed. It was the right opportunity at the right time for me."

Emi says she was not very confident when she started the course.

"To be honest, I didn't know what they expected from me. I became really interested in the concepts of our study. I enjoyed the studying itself so much, learning about the theory, including how different developmental delays can affect learning. I became very mentally tired doing the study, but pushed myself through. But it was when I started my work placement that I could properly understand what a teacher aide does, and how they do it."

Due to the relationships developed as a volunteer in her children's own school, Emi was able to negotiate a student placement at Sunnybank Hills State School which ultimately opened the way to paid employment.

Emi believes the program provides the opportunity to leverage a vital segment of our labour market – women who wish to resume employment, but who require flexibility to accommodate their parental responsibilities. "Nearly all of my friends who are mothers are looking for jobs, but still need to worry about picking their kids up from school. So many mothers I know want to go back to work so badly, but if they can't find something that starts after 9 and finishes by 3, it's just not possible."

"There's a really big workforce there. Skilled, multitasking, very smart individuals who are willing to work, have lots of qualifications, but who just can't do a 9-to-5 job. Working as a teacher aide is a great opportunity, especially for women who come from different backgrounds, and have skills in different cultures and languages," Emi said.

belong Trainees Support Flood Recovery

Jimboomba Community Garden suffered the impacts of severe flooding in the early months of 2017.

Since then, **belong** Conservation and Land Management trainees have played a big part in supporting recovery efforts, says program coordinator, Raelee Vearring.

"Helping return the garden to full strength following the floods was a big achievement for the group," said Raelee.

"Lots had to be done from scratch. Everything in the garden had to be composted, garden beds needed to be rebuilt, and a whole lot of other building and maintenance undertaken," she said.

Raelee said trainees have attended to a wide range of tasks, including weed eradication, the restoration of damaged creek banks, propagation, and cultivating edible crops. Edibles grown and harvested by the group were donated to the community through food cooperatives and charity organisations.

Our Jimboomba and Scenic Rim trainees have supported the recovery and rehabilitation of additional sites around the region.

Careers Day Events a Big Hit



belong's Employment and Training team delivered two stellar Careers Day events this year, each attracting well over 60 of our job-seeking clients, and drawing in fantastic industry support.

Each event has opened with a Q&A style panel discussion where our job-seeking clients have enjoyed the opportunity to hear from industry guests and ask them some burning questions about the secrets to employment success.

Networking opportunities and a shared lunch have followed.

Many of the job seekers we support hail from backgrounds where employment and industry qualifications are the exception rather than the rule. They miss out on the kinds of role modelling that set up positive expectations for career development from an early age, and are denied access to sources of opportunity offered through strong networks.

These events have provided much needed opportunities for people to explore their fit with a range of companies, to build self-confidence, and to get the insider's perspective on how to stand out from the crowd when applying for a job.

The networking opportunities available at this event are a vital ingredient to breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage and unemployment.

We are grateful all organisations that have supported these events, including Bunnings, Hutchinson Builders, Hastings Deering, Haulmark Trailers, Skyline Landscape Services, Sunst8 Group, Centacare, Frizelle Sunshine Automotive, Builders Clean Brisbane, BUSY at Work, TABMA Australia, and Electrogrouop.

World Village Market Supports Small Business Development



Saffron and Ice Cream!

It's a curious sounding combination.

But a match made in heaven according to World Village Market coordinator, Parvaneh ("Pari") Madhidi.

As someone who hails from the birthplace of ice cream, Pari should know.

For millennia now, the people of Iran have been making this delicious frozen dessert thanks to an ingenious feat of structural engineering known as *yakhchal*. These ancient evaporative coolers enabled ice retrieved during the winter to be preserved during the long, hot desert summers. The creation of ice cream made from milk, eggs, sugar, rose water, saffron, vanilla, and pistachios soon followed.

Pari and her business partner, Merhab, have used the World Village Market as a testing ground to launch a brand new venture. They have since sourced a commercial kitchen space, and now supply various Persian and Afghan grocery stores across Brisbane.

"Everyone should try this one," Pari said.

(P.S. It's delicious! - Ed)

A Hand Up for People in Need

Emergency Relief

Demand for our frontline relief services at **belong** provides a clear window into the financial, physical and emotional health of our Southside community.

For the second year running, we recorded a significant increase in the total number of families assisted through our Emergency Relief program compared to the previous financial year, with more than 1400 people assisted.

Rent and utility bills remained the top areas of need this year, while job insecurity, domestic violence, and poverty remained the factors that most commonly propel members of our community into crisis.

2018 marks our final year of funding under the current service agreement with the Department of Social Services.

We were recently delighted to have had this funding renewed for a further five years commencing from January 2019. We look forward to continuing to provide this lifeline to families suffering financial hardship through the provision of financial aid, information and referral support.

Food Cooperative

The developing crisis in food security affecting households in Acacia Ridge and surrounding districts grew visibly deeper this year, with a **21% increase in demand** recorded compared to the 2016-17 financial year.

Demand for this service has now outstripped the limits of what we can access through partnering food relief charities such as Foodbank and SecondBite. One of our foremost priorities in the year ahead is to leverage financial contributions from across the community that will allow us to supplement existing sources of supply through purchasing additional food. People can support this vital service by making a donation. Visit www.belong.org.au/donate



21% INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR FOOD

**17.7% INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR
FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL ASSISTANCE**

Health and Wellbeing



Health and Wellbeing underlies each of our capacity to live productive, valuable and purposeful lives. It defines a pillar of our work that we are proud to have advanced considerably in the 2017-18 financial year. In October 2017, we launched our NewAccess program, extending opportunities for early intervention, low-intensity psychological support to people from CALD communities. This was joined in 2018 by our E3 (Engage, Equip, Empower) program, which provides Pasifika community members with practical tools and strategies to cope effectively with common life stressors.

We have built upon earlier community consultations to develop two additional business plans, and are exploring opportunities to launch these in the year ahead. “Supported Mothers” will address the need of Southside mothers for wrap around support during pregnancy and beyond, while “Flourish” will deliver an intensive program of language and cognitive enrichment to vulnerable children during their critical first 1000 days of development.

A New Approach to CALD Mental Health

October 2017 marked the launch of NewAccess, our one-to-one coaching program funded by the Brisbane South Public Health Network, and developed by *beyondblue*.

Tailored to address the needs of CALD community members, our program provides people with support and coaching to tackle common life pressures, such as:

- Financial worries or instability
- Life at home / family problems
- Change in living arrangements
- New parent worries
- Health concerns or uncertainty
- Long-term isolation or loneliness
- Work and study stress.

Working within the framework of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, our coaches are trained to help people develop the skills and knowledge needed to handle these common stresses.

We work with migrants, refugees, people seeking asylum, international students, people on a skilled working visa, and anyone else from CALD backgrounds. The service involves six one-on-one consultations between clients and our coaches. There is no need for formal referrals from doctors or specialists, and anyone over the age of 18 is able to access this program.



**404
SESSIONS
DELIVERED**

**130 CLIENTS
SUPPORTED**



**RECOVERY
RATE 83%**

Breakfast Club Boosts School Attendance

Our Breakfast Club program at Watson Road State School in Acacia Ridge received a much needed boost in March this year, with the launch of a new partnership that has strengthened the program's capacity to support kids in need.

United Way Australia helped to leverage financial and other contributions from new supporters, including the mighty Brisbane Lions Australian Rules Football Club.

Currently more than 52% of Watson Road students are starting school "developmentally vulnerable" – double the state average.

By providing breakfast to 129 primary students five days a week, the Breakfast Program is enhancing learning outcomes for students, and building stronger relationships across the community.

A key outcome to date has been a marked increase in attendance. Previously, attendance on any given school day was less than 50%. Since the commencement of this program, attendance has reached 90%, exceeding benchmarks set by the Queensland Department of Education.

Research has found that food relief programs like school breakfasts translate to increased focus, concentration, improved physical health, attendance and performance at school. In addition to providing breakfasts, the community initiative is educating families about nutrition and healthy eating, as well as providing a friendly way for families to engage with school.

Healthy Start for Kids....

The Acacia Ridge Community Centre operates in a district marked by some of Queensland's worst outcomes for early childhood development measured against nearly every commonly used indicator.

A stream of research known as epigenetics (alternatively, 'foetal 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 of developmental delays and school failure. The program operated at a single site in North Carolina between 1972 and 1985, and was evaluated for its longitudinal impacts. With a combination of teaching, learning enrichment strategies, and enriched care-giving in early childhood education settings, the program demonstrated that even children from backgrounds of extreme disadvantage could be protected from long-term harm and achieve levels of health and achievement comparable to the wider population.

....Healthy Start for Kids

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.

This year, we have developed business cases for two programs that will provide the best possible start in life for disadvantaged Southside kids.

Supported Mothers will provide wrap around support to expecting mothers experiencing social and economic disadvantage. Accessing the best possible supports during pregnancy can prove challenging for most mothers, but even more so for women experiencing significant barriers to access arising from factors such as poverty, relationship instability, limited English literacy, limited health systems literacy, or limited understanding of their health needs during pregnancy. This program will help ensure that women are linked to the right supports at the right time, resulting in the best possible health outcomes for Mums and Bubs.

Flourish will build on the lessons from the Abecedarian Project to deliver an early intervention program of cognitive and language enrichment to vulnerable children on the Southside of Brisbane. Language skills provide the foundation to self-regulation by providing a framework for differentiating internal/emotional states, and being able to communicate effectively with others. The first 1000 days of life are critical to this development. The program will engage intensively with at-risk children during early childhood, setting them up for stronger futures.

We are seeking financial contributions to help launch these programs in 2019. Please contact Trish Cattermole, **belong** Director, at TrishC@belong.org.au

THE
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Healthy Systems Literacy

Health Systems Literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to effectively navigate Australian health systems, accessing the right support at the right time. Factors that define a person's health systems literacy include knowledge of and capacity to negotiate topics such as:

- Medicare
- Centrelink supports for people on low incomes (e.g. Health Care Cards)
- General Practitioners
- Making Appointments
- Accessing Interpreters
- Preventative Care
- Bulk Billing versus Private Billing
- Health Assessments.

Inala Primary Care has received funding through the Brisbane South Public Health Network (BSPHN) to deliver a Health Systems Literacy program targeting 8 CALD communities on the Southside of Brisbane.

belong has recently entered a partnership with Inala Primary Care to recruit and train 8 or more *Community Health Champions* who will in turn deliver a host of educational presentations and events to their respective communities between March and September 2019. Communities targeted through this program include Afghan, Iraqi, Latin American/Spanish-speaking, Pacific Islander, Persian, Somali, South Sudanese, and Vietnamese.



Our Multicultural Women's Group used their regular gatherings this year to engage a range of speakers who delivered health-related information and activities.



Free art classes hosted by Art Therapist, Ellen Clarke, were a popular outlet for our community last summer.

Lifelong Learning



belong believes that everyone deserves the opportunity to learn and grow throughout their lifespan.

Our Skilling Queenslanders for Work programs frequently engage mature-aged learners seeking a change in career direction as they return to work following parenthood, or are employed in industries facing decline. Sometimes all they want is the joy of trying something new!

Many of our other programs and services also support learning opportunities for people of all ages.

Barbara's Story....

When Barbara Legua first migrated to Australia from the Solomon Islands, she worked part-time with Medicare and then with Redland City Council and Disability Services. But the last ten years saw Barbara fully occupied with the enormous responsibilities of raising a child. As her son grew, she recognised she now had more time for herself and was eager to return to work.

She initially completed courses in Aged Care and Community Services but soon realised the regular shift work of these occupations prevented her from spending meaningful time with family. Her search for the elusive work-life balance continued.



Barbara heard about **belong's** "Diversity in Education" program through a friend-of-a-friend (namely, Emi!) who participated in an earlier program intake. The program supports culturally and linguistically diverse learners to complete a CHC30213 Certificate III in Education Support, thereby developing the knowledge and skills required to work as a Teacher Aide or in other education support roles. Students are also able to complete units of competency from FSK20113 Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways on a needs basis, to further boost their core foundation skills needed for long-term success in training and employment.

"I was really nervous but also really excited," said Barbara, reflecting on her first moments in the classroom. (Continued on next page)

....Barbara's Story

"I found the trainer was wonderful and really helped everyone feel settled. Everyone was so welcoming. Our group was a really diverse mix of students. The trainer was very good at explaining things in different ways to help all of the students understand."

With help and guidance from **belong**, Barbara started her placement in Term 4 2017 at Junction Park State School, where she worked alongside a teacher in a Prep classroom.

"When going on this placement, I had butterflies in my tummy", Barbara said.

"I had lots going on in my mind. It was comforting to know that whenever I needed additional support, Sudhara from **belong** was always on hand and there to help me out."

Among the children that Barbara supported, there was one child with autism and a few others with intellectual disabilities. Barbara worked closely with these children and learnt how important an extra set of hands in the classroom really is. Barbara said that working with these children really opened her eyes.

"Without one-on-one support, children that need an intense level of support would be completely left behind."

Barbara left such a strong impression at Junction Park that the school offered her a job to continue working there in the new school year. Barbara is over the moon to now be working as a paid and valued Teacher Aide at Junction Park State School – and have enough time on her hands to be with her family as well.



Our English language classes engage learners of all ages and backgrounds.



Our volunteering program at belong provides opportunities for people of all ages to learn new skills and contribute to their community.

Active Citizenship



Everyone has a part to play in steering and shaping our community at all levels, whether it's a street, a suburb, a city, or our entire nation. belong has been proud to promote Active Citizenship in many ways in the 2017-2018 financial year. A key highlight has been the launch of our Active Citizenship program, which has enhanced community participation in Australian democracy through delivering 1:1 voter registration support and larger community education events. Volunteering is another avenue to Active Citizenship and participation in our community. belong continues to offer a wide range of volunteering opportunities for community members. Several of our programs and services exist almost solely due to the generosity and tireless efforts of our volunteers. Thank you!

Active Citizenship

With 20.5% of people born overseas, 200 languages spoken, and 100 religions practiced, cultural diversity is the reality of modern Queensland. Yet the potentials of cultural diversity extend far beyond the mere presence of diversity itself. It requires avenues for expression and inclusion such that its benefits are shared by all.

belong's Active Citizenship program arose as a direct response to concerns voiced by CALD community leaders that political engagement within their communities remains limited. We convened a steering committee of CALD community leaders and politicians to identify both challenges and potentials, and to develop strategies to address this situation.

Consultations with our steering committee and other community leaders revealed that limited self-confidence, a lack of skill and knowledge regarding the voting process, and beliefs that voting has limited 'value' or impact on the community posed the most significant barriers to electoral participation.

Messages were developed in liaison with the steering committee and wider community to address these barriers, and were translated into five languages (Arabic, Dari, Dinka, Farsi and Mandarin). 33 different cultural communities were reached through targeted communications strategies (e.g., multilingual media, community networks and gatherings, etc.).

This ongoing program has achieved the following positive outcomes to date:

- Increased community confidence in the electoral process and its positive impacts on the community
- Increased the confidence of CALD community members that influence can be effected through political engagement (both 365-days-a-year, and through electoral participation)
- Raised awareness among prospective first-time voters and their communities that the process is simple, and that support is available
- Enabled new citizens from 9 different countries of origin to vote in the recent Queensland elections.

To date the program enhanced participation in the recent Queensland elections in 9 cultural communities, and has raised knowledge, understanding and awareness of Queensland's democracy across an additional 33 communities.



**INCREASED
ELECTORAL
PARTICIPATION
ACROSS 9
COMMUNITIES**



**STRONGER
KNOWLEDGE OF
DEMOCRACY
ACROSS 33
COMMUNITIES**

Success at Queensland Multicultural Awards!



Trish Cattermole, Jamileh Sabiri, Damian West and Hadi Karimi, pictured at the Queensland Multicultural Awards

belong was delighted to be named a winner at the 2018 Queensland Multicultural Awards (Community category) in August. The award acknowledges our work promoting democratic participation among new and emerging communities through our Active Citizenship program.

While we are undeniably chuffed to have seen our work celebrated at such an exciting event, this would not have been possible without the support and trust of many partners and friends.

We are blessed to enjoy the support of several political leaders on the Southside of Brisbane who hold the values of democracy and social inclusion very dearly – in particular, we are grateful to **Peter Russo MP (Toohey)**, **Graham Perrett MP (Moreton)** and **Leeanne Enoch MP (Algester)** who have each made significant contributions to the program to date.

These three were joined by a number of other community leaders and supporters who each shared with us generously their time and wisdom as members of the program's Steering Committee, as program ambassadors, and through participation in events.

....Awards Success

Thank you so much to the following:

Rose Karlo (African Australian Women's Association); **Akua Afriyie Ahenkorah**; **Ali Karimi** (Queensland Hazara Community); **Ben Driscoll** (office of Graham Perrett MP); **Faisa Adan** (African Australian Women's Association); **Honey Binny** (Radio 4EB and Federation of Filipino Communities in Queensland Inc.); **John Deng** (South Sudanese community); **John Prescott** (office of Peter Russo MP); **Lida Daliri** (Persian Community); **Umesh Chandra** (Brisbane Indian Times); and **Preeti Parekh** (Gujarati community). Many of these same people directly supported our award nomination through offering letters of support.

But finally, the award belongs foremost to the many community members who have taken up the opportunity to register to vote and to learn about our democracy through participating in the program's events and activities. Sometimes this has involved considerable personal sacrifice. An example was the story of an 80 year old woman who earlier migrated to Australia as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She came to an event in Acacia Ridge all the way from Petrie accompanied by her young grandson who drove her. She had forgotten to bring documentation needed to support her online registration. They drove back to Petrie, then again back to Acacia Ridge with the necessary documents in hand!

This was a touching example of the tremendous appetite shared among new citizens to cast their votes and help steer vital areas of public policy.

belong works at the coal face of the community and witnesses social issues in urgent need of fresh thinking if effective solutions are to be reached. Issues such as poverty, hunger, job insecurity, and intergenerational unemployment.

Meaningful reforms will only be achieved with active engagement from all corners of the community, placing pressure on our politicians to take their lead from the ground up. We believe that the inclusion of wider circles of Southside residents in the political process takes us all a step closer towards achieving these ends.

Our Amazing Volunteers!

Our amazing pool of Volunteers remained the heart and soul of our work here at **belong** this year!

A significant amount of our work at **belong** simply would not be possible without the skills, commitment and tireless efforts of our community volunteers.

Volunteering is an important component of Active Citizenship, providing vital avenues for people to contribute to our communities according to their skills, capacities and interests.

In 2017-2018, **belong's** volunteers supported:

- Daily operation of our Food Cooperative at Acacia Ridge Community Centre
- Delivery of community events
- Maintenance of our gardens and facilities
- English Language Classes
- Citizenship Education Classes
- Reception and Administration
- Much more!

belong always welcomes expressions of interest from community members interested in volunteering. We will arrange a time to meet with you to discuss your interests, skills, and availability, and will match you with the right opportunity.

Contact info@belong.org.au

Our How-to-Vote workshops provided Active Citizenship Program participants with a simulated voting experience before casting their first ever votes at the Queensland election. It was a closely fought battle for the fabled seat of Belongville!

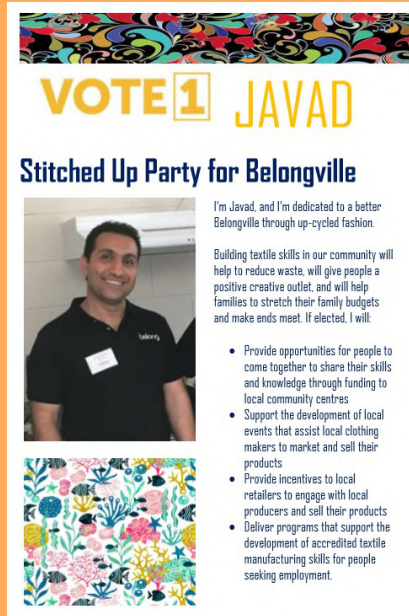


VOTE 1 TRISH MP
Gardening Party for Belongville

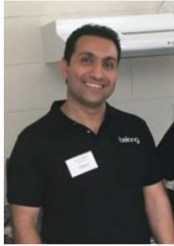


I'm Trish, and I'm dedicated to making Belongville a better place through Gardening. My promise to the people of Belongville:

- Funding for more community gardens
- Funding to all primary schools to run gardening programs for our children
- Fighting to protect local parks and gardens from rezoning and development
- Increase in public green spaces
- Continued funding to people to gain employment in horticulture, conservation and land management.


VOTE 1 JAVAD
Stitched Up Party for Belongville



I'm Javad, and I'm dedicated to a better Belongville through up-cycled fashion.

Building textile skills in our community will help to reduce waste, will give people a positive creative outlet, and will help families to stretch their family budgets and make ends meet. If elected, I will:

- Provide opportunities for people to come together to share their skills and knowledge through funding to local community centres
- Support the development of local events that assist local clothing makers to market and sell their products
- Provide incentives to local retailers to engage with local producers and sell their products
- Deliver programs that support the development of accredited textile manufacturing skills for people seeking employment.




VOTE 1 JAMILEH
Art and Poetry Party for Belongville



I'm Jamileh, and I believe that sharing our stories through creative arts is the key to building a connected Belongville community. That's why I'm proud to represent the Art and Poetry Party in the seat of Belongville. If elected, I promise to:

- Fund additional positions for Art teachers in our local schools
- Support the creation of community events that invite members of our community of all ages and backgrounds to share their stories through visual art and creative writing
- Work with local council to open more public spaces for use by local artists.




VOTE 1 DAMIAN
Sailing Party for Belongville



I'm Damian, and I've been a proud Belongville resident for the last 4 years. If elected, I will fight for more opportunities for people in our community to learn how to sail. I will:

- Team up with local sailing clubs to make sure introductory programs are affordable for families and single people
- Provide opportunities for kids to learn through incentives to local schools to introduce sailing as part of their school sporting curriculum
- Fight for the protection of our local waterways to ensure that current and future generations can enjoy sailing in healthy local environments.




VOTE 1 SEBASTIAN
Soccer Party for Belongville



I'm Sebastian, and I believe that 'The World Game' is key to building a strong Belongville community through health, well-being, and coming together to kick the round ball! If elected, I promise to:

- Support the ongoing development of women's football clubs in our community
- Provide vouchers to low-income parents so that their kids can participate in school holiday football clinics at their local club
- Reduce financial pressures facing local grassroots clubs
- Work with local clubs to create more opportunities for older people to continue to enjoy the game through formal and informal competitions




*“The true measure of
any society can be found
in how it treats its most
vulnerable members”*

(Mahatma Gandhi)



belong

community • people • opportunity

Acacia Ridge Community Centre: 21 Hanify Street, Acacia Ridge QLD 4110

The Social Space: 21 Clifton Street, Moorooka QLD 4105

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