



belong
community • people • opportunity

Our Year in Review

Annual Report

2018-2019



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.

Image courtesy of Acacia Ridge artist, David Riley

Our Pillars

Leadership & Community Engagement

We listen actively to our stakeholders, creating work that delivers on the genuine needs and aspirations of our community.

We provide lifelines to the most disadvantaged people in our community. We support people to build skills, find work, and establish social enterprises.

Financial Inclusion

Health and Wellbeing

We support people's understanding of health systems and good self-care. We provide spaces and opportunities for people to unwind and connect.

We support people's right to learn and grow at all stages of the lifespan through training, community education, and meaningful activities.

Lifelong Learning

Active Citizenship

We work with community members to build their understanding of Australian citizenship, and provide opportunities to participate.

Who We Are

First established in 1989 as Acacia Ridge Community Support Inc., **belong** is a not-for-profit community-based organisation that provides services and support to people and communities across the Southside of Brisbane. Our Financial Assistance Service and various training projects extend more broadly, reaching into nearby local government areas including Logan, Ipswich and the Scenic Rim.

In our 30-year history, we have grown from a modest neighbourhood house offering a meeting space for members of the community to a vibrant agency servicing some of the highest-need suburbs on Brisbane's Southside. Our team of staff and volunteers share a belief that communities are strengthened when their most vulnerable members are supported and included in all aspects of life. We welcome and offer support for families, individuals and communities in a safe and respectful environment, delivering a range of programs and services in response to identified local needs and aspirations.

At **belong**, we work in partnership with communities, other service providers and local businesses to ensure we remain responsive and relevant to local community needs, and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

belong operates two community venues:

The **Acacia Ridge Community Centre** is located at 21 Hanify St, Acacia Ridge, adjacent to beautiful Grenier Park. The Community Centre is a place of welcome for members of the community and home to the majority of our programs and services.

The Social Space is located at the corner of Clifton and Fleurs Streets in Moorooka, the site of the former Annerley-Moorooka Senior Citizens' Hall. Since taking over the lease for this building in 2016, we have steadily transformed it into a dynamic community and social enterprise hub that is helping build connections and skills across the community.

Table of Contents

Delivery Highlights	4
President's Report	5
Director's Report	6
Leadership and Community Engagement	8
Financial Inclusion	13
Health and Wellbeing	16
Lifelong Learning	20
Active Citizenship	24

Delivery Highlights

Inaugural fundraiser helps us feed more disadvantaged Southsiders



196 people supported to gain qualifications and find employment



NewAccess program enhances mental health of more than 300 people



Tehran Café social enterprise launched at The Social Space



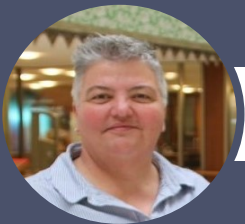
Food and Financial Assistance provided to vulnerable people on 1988 occasions



Volunteers enriched our work across a wide range of programs



100 hours of community English classes provided to people of all ages



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Evolution as gradual development is at the very heart of **belong**, and 2019 has seen **belong** continue to evolve. For **belong** to do so in our communities, we look to lead and build on our resilience, hope and opportunities. Consolidating our fundamental principles for operating across the many communities and programs that we do has required an enormous effort by the Committee, Staff and volunteers.

The **belong** Committee has navigated a myriad of complex funding needs, and changing political environments. Committee members come together with a responsiveness that is only bested by the efforts of our staff and volunteers. Our 2018 – 2019 AGM saw the retiring of our Treasurer, **Rodolfo Rodriguez**. Rodolfo brought a wealth of community experience to the Committee and we thanked him for his service. Taking on the challenge of Treasurer is **Nina Watson**. Nina has extensive corporate experience, particularly in human resources and along with a fresh and younger perspective is a fabulous asset to the Committee. My thanks to all the Committee members for their support, efforts and commitment.

Our year has seen new avenues of community connection and support including the inaugural Food Security campaign fundraiser, 'Hangar for Hunger'. Without the support of the Hon Leeanne Enoch Member for Algeester, Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts and Heather Mattes and the team at Archerfield Airport, we would not have been able to bring these issues to the broader community's attention and raise some much needed funds.

Program and funding changes have seen a number of staffing changes. All of our staff members are amazing and bring real expertise, stamina and commitment to their work.

Trish Cattermole is the Director of **belong**. What that means is Trish has an uncanny ability to be many people and jobs at once. Leading the staff, volunteers and driving our broader community connections, Trish has shown this year a fortitude to deal with considerable change. To Trish and to all of the **belong** staff, we say thank you.

Our broader community connections, our programs, our food security activities and our facilities could not continue without our volunteers. Volunteers, our community members, are the core of **belong**. We look forward to celebrating the year with the volunteers in a special end of year event.

At this year's AGM I will be stepping down as President. I have moved to the Sunshine Coast and only for that reason is it necessary for me to move on. It has been an enormous honour and learning experience. Evolution! We are looking forward to a new President taking the reins, bringing new skills and experiences and continuing the evolution of **belong**.

Congratulations to everyone on an exceptional 2018 - 2019 and I wish you all the very best for the future.

Jo Justo (President)

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



It's often remarked that the only constant in life is change, and that perhaps applies doubly so to our work at the interface of community, politics, and an evolving society. Our capacity to navigate change and respond with agility to emerging trends remained a hallmark of our work at **belong** this year.

2019 was a year of considerable evolution at **belong**, with all staff striving to ensure that the programs we deliver are offered as a whole of service, wrap around response to our community members. It's not always easy to stay across what services and programs are on offer, and much easier to work in teams as silos. I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to all staff at **belong** for their continued efforts to ensure that we work and deliver services as one team, providing great service to our community members and participants.

We continue to strive to synergize our services in an increasingly constrained fiscal environment, constantly seeking to make our organisation as efficient as possible while responding to local need.

The year has confirmed my belief that local neighbourhood centres are an essential part of the fabric of communities. The current insecurity of employment and underemployment has resulted in many local community members coming to the centre to seek help, support and referral. Many of these community members have no experience of accessing help and the neighbourhood centre has become the first port of call.

Our NewAccess program didn't receive funding this year despite being a highly innovative and successful program for people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds. I would like to make special mention of **Josephine Aufai** who led the team to become a highly successful and responsive group. Her

efforts in this space were outstanding.

Our second venue in Moorooka, “The Social Space” has undergone significant development in the past year. We now have the **Tehran Café** operating from the space offering a welcoming and delicious experience for locals.

The Social Space continues to provide a much needed venue for local community groups and our training programs.

This year we are activating the space to increase social inclusion for all community members including people with a disability. The venue is fully accessible and with the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the increasing social isolation of community members, The Social Space will offer a busy hub of activity for everyone with a range of activities on offer.

belong continues to be able to punch way above its weight due to the wonderful volunteers who contribute so much to the organisation. A big thanks to all our Committee members who offer support, guidance and the governance needed to keep **belong** and integral part of the communities it serves.

Particular thanks to our outgoing President, **Jo Justo**. Her leadership has seen the network of supporters of **belong** grow, a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement with increased benefits for staff and, for me in particular, a genuine and brilliant critique of operations and services, and support to make the organisation do good better. Thanks Jo.

Trish Cattermole (Director, *belong*)

Leadership and Community Engagement

***belong* exercises its leadership by listening and responding to the aspirations 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.**

Community Impact Collaborative

belong continues to work as part of the CIC, a working collaborative of seven Southside Neighbourhood Centres that gather to share resources; to discuss emerging issues and trends, and; to raise the profile of neighbourhood centres as a vital response to the diverse and evolving needs of local communities. In the previous financial year, the CIC built a clearly articulated program logic that demonstrates the strength of neighbourhood centres as professional, place-based responses to the needs of our most vulnerable residents. We built on this work this year by developing an advocacy and communications strategy that will help deliver this message more effectively to time-poor political leaders, bureaucrats and business.

Student Placements

belong continued its commitment to building the next generation of community workers this year, hosting eight undergraduate students on placement as part of their degree requirements in Social Work and Human Services.



Students Brianna Park and Susu Do were placements with *belong* this year.

Venue Hire

belong offers a range of affordable venue hire options for community to come together, celebrate, plan, connect and unwind. The Social Space in Moorooka currently hosts ten regular groups, with an additional eight groups regularly gathering at the Acacia Ridge Community Centre. Consider us for your next meeting, community celebration, activity group or workshop!

Event Raises Vital Funds

Ninety percent of Acacia Ridge residents rank among Queensland's most financially hard-pressed decile, according to ABS data.

Food security remains a critical issue for the communities we support. In November last year, we were overwhelmed by the generosity of donors who supported our inaugural fundraiser ("Hangar for Hunger") coordinated by Leeanne Enoch MP and generously hosted by the Archerfield Airport Corporation.

The event raised \$32,000 which in the short-term is helping to alleviate the stress and suffering of many of Brisbane's most financially vulnerable residents.

Huge thanks to Leeanne Enoch MP for your tireless commitment to this issue, along with Jackie Trad MP, and platinum sponsor, Archerfield Airport Corporation who donated an incredible \$10K!

To date, donations from the event have had a real impact, including on our Breakfast Club program at Watson Road State School.

DAILY BREAKFAST FOR 150 DISADVANTAGED SCHOOL PUPILS



40% INCREASE IN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE THROUGH GOOD NUTRITION



Queenslander of the Year at belong

We have a Queenslander of the Year in our ranks at **belong**!

Congratulations and well done to **Trish Edington**, who received an award from Leeanne Enoch MP marking 2019 Queensland Day celebrations. The award acknowledges Trish's outstanding professional and voluntary contributions to community within the Algester Electorate and across the Southside of Brisbane, including her tireless work with **belong**.

Events at *belong*

belong continued to deliver 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

Hundreds joined our annual ANZAC Day service to commemorate the immense sacrifices made by the ANZACs along with countless other Australian defense personnel in the line of duty. We were touched this year to see the day thoroughly embraced by the full diversity of our Acacia Ridge community, including the very young, and people with many different cultural and religious identities. Big thanks to staff, parents and students from Acacia Ridge State School and Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Primary School along with Leeanne Enoch MP (Member for Algester) and representatives from the Sunnybank RSL Sub-branch for your support. *Lest We Forget.*



belong Short Film Festival

The second annual *belong* Short Film Festival returned to The Social Space in June for an entertaining two night program showcasing the tales of talents of Australian story-tellers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

A new element was introduced for the opening evening where members of the Voices of Colour collaborative delivered "Stories of Systematic Racism" - a performative and spoken word showcase of Brisbane artists who share their lived experience of growing up and living as a person of colour in the Australian community. Artists included Anisa Nanduala, Lala Bayles, Huda Fadlemhwa, Rolve Kuot, and Jonathan Sri.

The main event followed on Saturday evening, with a full house of 80 guests enjoying a superb showcase of films curated by Brisbane filmmaker and director, **Grace Julia**. Big thanks Grace, and thank you also to Kaushik Das (our special guest speaker) and to Cr Peter Matic who represented the Lord Mayor of Brisbane.

The annual *belong* Short Film Festival is proudly funded by the Brisbane City Council through its Suburban Community and Multicultural Festivals Funding Program. We thank the BCC for allowing us to present the stories that connect us all!

Uniforms 4 Kids!

belong welcomed representatives of the Queensland Police Service in November where they gifted us donated clothes under their new initiative, Uniforms 4 Kids. The program invites police officers to donate their unwanted uniforms to be tailored by a community-based sewing group into new and unique items for disadvantaged Southside children.



The aims of this venture include:

- Improving self-esteem and giving children in need a real sense of pride
- Reducing bullying
- Bridging the communication gap and understanding between local communities and police
- Connecting and supporting retirees and other members of our community by engaging them in a vital community program.

Open Day

belong hosted its inaugural Open Day event this year, attracting around 50 visitors on the day.



belong
community • people • opportunity

BELONG OPEN DAY

22 August 2019, 10am - 2pm
Grenier Park, Acacia Ridge

Come along and find out from the team about all the Activities, Services and Programs we have to offer!!

- Training and Careers Support
- Volunteering Opportunities
- Recreational and Social Activities
- Information for People with a Disability and their Career
- Community Events
- Emotional Supports
- Free Education Programs
- Food and Financial Assistance
- Venues for Hire

Free Sausage Sizzle from 12 noon.

ALL WELCOME!

In the event of wet weather, the Open Day will go ahead next door to Grenier Park at the Acacia Ridge Community Centre (21 Hanify Street, Acacia Ridge)



(E) info@belong.org.au
(P) 3277 4893

Party in the Park

The signature event of “The Ridge” returned this year for an energetic day long program of live entertainment, great food, activities for all ages, and sharing in the spirit of our Acacia Ridge Community. Global beatboxing sensation, **Joel Turner** returned to his Acacia Ridge stomping ground to headline this year’s Party, as he now prepares to launch a new solo album. Thanks Joel!



Voices of Colour crew delivered a sensational curtain raiser for the 2019 *belong* Short Film Festival!



Grace Julia was a superb curator!



Latin American community members enjoy a Breaking Bread and Barriers event



belong's Hadi Karimi (right) retained his title as King of the Mountain - an anticipated showdown at Party in the Park each year!



Kaushik Das (left) was an inspiring guest speaker at the 2019 *belong* Short Film Festival

Financial Inclusion

***belong* continued to uphold the safety, security, and dignity of some of our most vulnerable community members this year through the delivery of Financial Assistance and the operation of our Food Cooperative based at the Acacia Ridge Community Centre.**

The One Box

belong entered a new partnership with **The One Box** in January this year, enhancing the security of disadvantaged Acacia Ridge residents by providing a weekly box full of fresh fruit, vegies, milk and bread.

The program is designed to support families who identify as “at risk”. The One Box supplies the boxes which we distribute from the Acacia Ridge Community Centre every Wednesday.

There has been an overwhelming response to this initiative, and we are exploring opportunities to expand on this partnership in the year ahead.

Approximately 720 boxes were provided to our community during the latter half of the financial year, providing a vital supplement to the activities of our Food Cooperative.

Hyam's Story



Hyam comes for support from The One Box program at *belong* on days that she has access to a friend's car. Access to fresh food through the Coop eases some of the financial stress of feeding a family of 5 kids.

“Having fresh food eases some of the financial stress of feeding a family of 5 kids. Sometimes the kids look at me and ask ‘Aunty, why do you have nothing in here?’ Having access to The One Box means there is more food in the house all the time.”

Emergency Relief

belong's Emergency Relief service was accessed 1988 times in the 2018-2019 financial year, marking a 42% increase from the previous financial year.

Part of this increase can be attributed to the widening of our catchment under a renewed contract with the Department of Social Services which commenced in January this year.

However, the vast majority of clients accessing this service remain in close proximity to the Acacia Ridge Community Centre, demonstrating the escalating financial distress in our community as people struggle with job insecurity, casualization of work, wage stagnation, rising living costs and an increasingly punitive social safety net.

The top five reasons people accessed Emergency Relief in 2018-2019 were:

- Electricity bills
- Rent arrears
- Fuel and food relief
- Mobile phone bills
- Medical and Educational expenses

*"I came to **belong** this morning for Emergency Relief, and the team went above and beyond to help me. I came in there feeling worthless, lost, broken, and so alone, and I walked out with hope, support and motivation to get through what I'm going through. I highly recommend this to anyone who is having a hard time or needs assistance or just a talk. These guys are non-judgmental and are there for you so much!"*

(belong Emergency Relief client)



**42% INCREASE IN
DEMAND FOR EMERGENCY
RELIEF SUPPORT**

Food Cooperative

belong's Food Cooperative based at the Acacia Ridge Community Centre services low income earners through the provision of heavily discounted food and groceries accessed from our partnering agencies, Foodbank and Secondbite.

Demand for this service recorded a modest (2%) increase in the 2018-2019 Financial Year after recording large successive increases the previous two financial years.

We do not believe, however, that this indicates a tapering off in the escalating financial distress of our community, but rather, has resulted from several operational factors, including:

- Difficulties accessing and retaining volunteer
- delivery drivers, resulting in numerous closures of the Coop throughout the year
- The provision of supplementary food packages to community through our new partnership with The One Box
- An increase in clients accessing food from the Co-operative through our Emergency Relief service

We have made several calls for additional volunteers to assist with operation of the Cooperative this year. If you'd like to get involved, please contact us on (07) 3277 4893 or info@belong.org.au

Patricia's Story

Patricia is a single mother, and even though she works part time, says that the cost of renting severely impacts her ability to provide other essentials for the family.

*"I've found that food often becomes the thing that I tend to cut back on when I'm really struggling. It's a difficult choice between keeping a roof over our heads or buying enough food. I'd hate to think of how I might have survived some weeks without the help of the Food Coop at **belong**."*



Health and Wellbeing

***belong* delivered programs this year to support people's understanding of health systems and good self-care. This included low-intensity psychological support through NewAccess and two programs that addressed health systems literacy.**

NewAccess Program

Our NewAccess program delivered low-intensity psychological support to a total of 308 people across 1560 sessions this year, achieving significant reductions in symptoms of anxiety and depression for the majority of clients serviced.

Funded by the Brisbane South Public Health Network (BSPHN), the program boosted the capacity of CALD community members to address a range of common life pressures.

Beacon Strategies were engaged by *belong* to conduct an evaluation of the NewAccess Program. NewAccess was found to be particularly successful for individuals who were experiencing issues in one aspect of their everyday life such as relationships, work or study that was causing them distress. The program was able to target that issue with specific goals and strategies to help the person work through the problem.

"I have had depression before - I had therapy for a year, but for the first time with NewAccess, I was able to understand what my depression and anxiety meant for me, and what the underlying problem was."

(belong NewAccess client)



**308 CLIENTS
ACCESSED THE
PROGRAM**



**1560 SESSIONS
DELIVERED**



**SIGNIFICANT
REDUCTION IN
ANXIETY AND
DEPRESSION**

Breaking Bread and Barriers (BB&B)

belong's Breaking Bread and Barriers (BB&B) project was delivered at The Social Space this year, engaging a total of eight cultural communities across bespoke dinner events that addressed issues of interest identified by each participating community.

Health and Wellbeing was the most salient theme across the events, with others including gender-based empowerment, and establishing social enterprises.

Guest speakers were sourced to meet with each community and address their area of expressed need. In exchange, visiting stakeholders were treated to cultural meals, entertainment, presentations, and the opportunity to network with and befriend members of the community.

A total of 325 people were engaged through this project with the following communities taking part:

Latin American; Filipino; Persian; Burundian; African women (via the African Australian Women's Association); South Sudanese; Indigenous; and Somali.

***belong* wishes to thank the Queensland Government through its Celebrating Multicultural Queensland Grants Program for making this project possible.**

BB&B Case Study: Latin American Community



Our Latin American community dinner engaged four guest speakers who presented information to assist in raising the health systems literacy and lifestyle opportunities for people in Brisbane's Latin American community.

The following benefits were achieved for community members:

- An increased awareness of the benefits of cultivating ongoing relationships with a good GP to ensure continuity of care
- An increased awareness of the benefits of seeking "Long consultations"
- Enhanced understanding of the array of Care Plans that provide free access to Specialists through Medicare
- The importance of self-advocacy and exploring options
- The importance of mental health, including the nexus between mental and physical health

Breaking Bread and Barriers Case Study: Indigenous Community

The events each delivered unique outcomes in line with the theme of interest identified by respective communities. Brisbane's Southside Indigenous community hosted one of the events. **belong** understands that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (A&TSI) communities have been historically placed within the administrative frame of multiculturalism in a way that has at times been damaging and that subtly reinforced the myth of *terra nullius*. **belong**, however, believes that the potentials of multiculturalism will be realised with the understanding that each and every one of us is a multicultural citizen of this country.

The Indigenous event, led by elders from the Acacia Ridge community, identified the education of children as a pressing issue and an important adjunct to health and wellbeing. Two speakers were recruited to present and engage with community:

- **Chris Richards** (Coordinator, Acacia Ridge YMCA Youth Space)
- **Liz Kupsch** (Noted researcher in First Nations education policy).

Outcomes achieved through this event included:

- Ongoing connection between the event attendees and guest speakers that have enhanced educational engagement of Indigenous children on the Southside of Brisbane
- Engagement of a number of children in the flexischool and other programs delivered from the Acacia Ridge YMCA Youth Space
- Enhanced the YMCA's understanding of the issues and barriers to the educational engagement of Indigenous young people. This exchange of information has led the YMCA to review and update a number of its practices, in turn improving engagement and educational outcomes
- Participation of a number of attendees in an action research project coordinated by Liz Kupsch that aims to inform First Nations education policy. This research is providing a direct avenue for Indigenous women in Brisbane to gain voice within the education system, and will contribute to positive policy recommendations as the research unfolds
- This same opportunity has built the confidence of women, knowing that they have the capacity to effect change that better represents the educational needs of their children
- Community members gained new skills and confidence in event planning and coordination, including food catering. For many, this was their first experience managing a sizeable event.

Your Health Guides

belong entered a partnership with **Inala Primary Care** this year to train a number of “Community Health Champions” who in turn delivered a range of educational presentations to their respective communities with the goal of raising *Health 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
- Preventative Care
- Bulk Billing versus Private Billing
- Health Assessments
- Allied Health Services

The following communities were engaged as part of the **Your Health Guides** project:

- South Sudanese
- Somali
- Spanish speaking
- Pasifika
- Persian

Confidence Boost for Health Champions

A key outcome of **Your Health Guides** has been the development of new confidence, presentation skills and leadership potential among the Community Health Champions trained in the project.

Malak and Hanan, who were already closely connected to the Acacia Ridge Community Centre, have since gained casual employment where they continue to present information on Australian health systems to African communities at **belong**’s events.

“I never saw myself being able to do something like this. I’ve learned so much, and now feel confident presenting this information to my community.”

(Hanan, Sudanese community)

Lifelong Learning

***belong* believes that everyone deserves opportunities to learn, grow and participate fully in community throughout their life. Our Skilling Queenslanders for Work programs frequently engages mature-age learners seeking a change in career direction or return to work after raising children. Many of our other programs and services also support learning opportunities for people of all ages.**

Skilling Queenslanders for Work

belong was proud to deliver the following community-based training programs this year, funded through the Queensland Government's Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative:

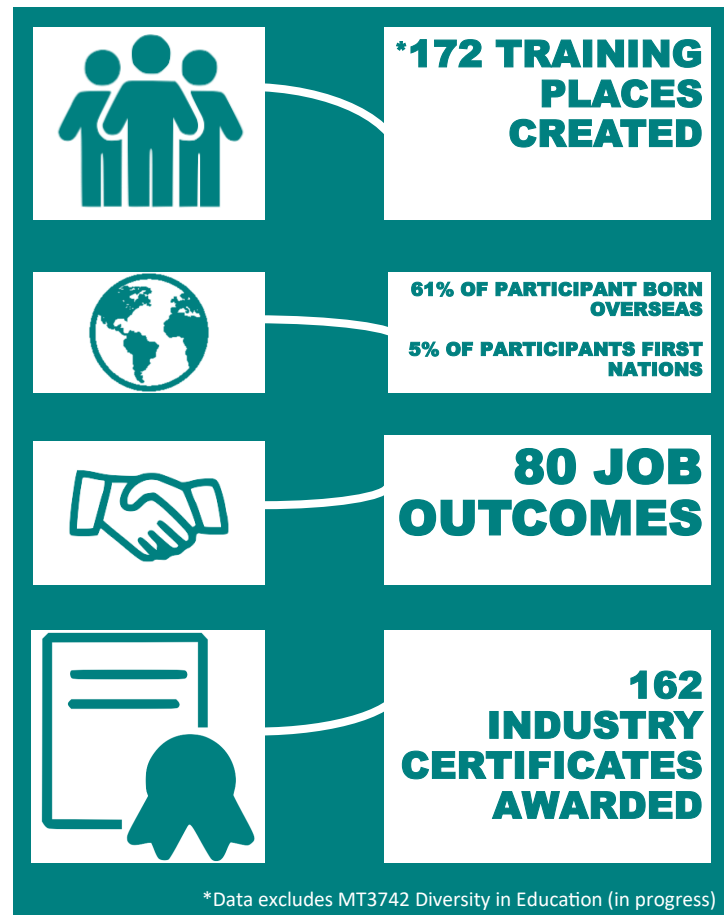
Community Work Skills programs:

- Education Support (MT2931)
- Cleaning (MT2936)
- Education Support (MT3742)*
- Retail Hardware (MT3314)
- Horticulture (MT2933)

Work Skills Traineeships:

- Greening Jimboomba (SE2932)
- Business Metro (MT3313)
- Business South-East (SE3317)
- Scenic Rim Conservation (SE3318)

*Indicates ongoing project



Training for All Walks of Life

The **belong** training team delivers community-based programs tailored to the individual needs, aspirations and life-circumstances of participating people. Our training participants frequently commence with a range of prevocational barriers to employment, including:

- Long-term unemployment, and associated psychosocial, motivational and confidence-related issues
- Recent migration status, in particular people from a refugee/asylum-seeker background who face a range of ongoing settlement and adjustment challenges
- Young and mature-aged learners, who face the added challenges of age-based discrimination
- Welfare-related issues (e.g., insecure accommodation, poverty, etc.)

We offer ongoing individual case management and wrap-around support to participants who experience such issues, leveraging services internal to **belong** whenever possible, and in other cases, offering individual client advocacy and referral to ensure participants can access the services they need.

Our training projects engage the support of numerous partners who provide invaluable site experience along with the benefits of their industry expertise and networks to prepare our participants for employment success.

Some highlights included:

- CaLM trainees from Bulimba worked at Oxley Creek Common in conjunction with the University of Queensland as part of a new restoration research project. The participants placed jute mat squares around newly established plants in order to suppress competition from other species
- Our Scenic Rim and Jimboomba CaLM trainees enjoyed working alongside contractors from “The World As I Am”, bush regeneration specialists in South East Queensland
- Staff from DELL used corporate volunteering hours to mentor our training participants through simulated job interviews
- The Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre have provided work experience for 22 of our cleaning participants, with five gaining ongoing employment
- The many partners who supported our Careers Day event in October.

33% TRAINING PARTICIPANTS UNDER 25 YEARS

30% TRAINING PARTICIPANTS OVER 40 YEARS

65% CALD BACKGROUND

Participants Overcome Barriers

When Acacia Ridge residents **Khadija Aiden** and **Malka Babiker** completed a cleaning training program with **belong** this year, they ventured into the job market with the added challenges of limited English, low literacy and numeracy, and a lack of confidence accessing unfamiliar worksites by car or public transport.

Only weeks later, the pair made such a tremendous impression on a paid work trial that they were offered ongoing part-time employment with **Builder's Clean Brisbane**; a team dedicated to cleaning construction work sites following the completion of jobs.

Veronica's Story

After participating in a **belong** Green Skills Traineeship project only a year ago, Veronica is now a paid supervisor on these very same projects!

Participation in the traineeship allowed Veronica to appreciate the breadth and depth of her existing skills and knowledge, which she now puts to use at the Jimboomba Community Garden.

She joins a growing line of successive **belong**/JCG training supervisors who were past participants in Skilling Queenslanders for Work and Green Army projects.



Commitment Key to Job Success

When **Malipo Muyobe** first commenced a Green Skills traineeship project with **belong** in Jimboomba this year, he faced many challenges relating to his migration history, including a lack of local work experience and qualifications.



18 weeks later, Malipo graduated not only with a Certificate I in Conservation and Land Management, but the additional honour of being the first of his 11 fellow trainees to gain employment.

His willingness to push his boundaries recently earned him employment with Fortress Frames where he now cuts and assembles frames for housing and commercial applications. He says that while this job is not directly linked to his newfound area of expertise, it came as the product of rekindled self-esteem and optimism brought about by his traineeship experience.

"I hadn't been working previously," said Malipo.

"This opportunity being here has given me confidence to be able to work in other areas, being around people, and working as part of a team," said Malipo.

"I'd love to come back to this kind of work in the future," he said.

New Career for Jacquie

People seek career change for many reasons, but for **belong** Green Skills trainee, **Jacqueline (Jacquie) Goebel**, the reason was simple.

“I’ve always loved working outdoors, and really wanted to get out of the four walls,” Jacquie said.

The 11-year retail veteran has since graduated with a Certificate I in Conservation and Land Management, and is now pursuing her dream of working in a nursery.

Her recent enrolment in a Certificate III in Production and Horticulture has set her on a clear pathway towards employment in the nursery industry.

“I think nursery work is my real passion. In **belong**’s program, we got to collect seeds, and from that, plant them. They’ve come up, we’ve transplanted them, and seen them grow. They’re so beautiful,” she said.



Happy Correspondence!



The support provided to training participants by the team at **belong** doesn't end with graduations - in fact, these events mark a new beginning, with on-going support provided to participants to find and sustain employment. The team recently followed up with Sandra Cooney who participated in an earlier Business Traineeship program.

Hi guys,

Just wanted to give you both an update on what's been happening with me for the last 6 months.

Well as you know, I got a job at Beaucare as a domestic lifestyle worker. I have to say I love my job. There is something different happening everyday.

I just started my Certificate 4 in Ageing Support. I also just got a bit of a promotion. I am now doing 1 day a week in the office helping Dianne do program and planning for all our activities we do.

Well I hope you have all been well. It was good to see another lot of students come through. Keep up all your great efforts on getting people back in the work force. You are very inspirational people and I enjoyed learning from you.

Regards,

Sandra

Active Citizenship

***belong* believes that everyone has a part to play in helping build strong, connected and welcoming communities. We provided numerous avenues for civic participation this year including volunteering, and other programs that prepare newly arrived people to participate fully in our democracy and society.**

Volunteer Program

Our amazing pool of volunteers remained the heart and soul of work 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 2018-2019, ***belong***'s 33 volunteers supported:

- Daily operation of our Food Cooperative at the Acacia Ridge Community Centre
- Delivery of community events
- Maintenance of our gardens and facilities

- Citizenship Education Classes
- English Language 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

English Language Classes

Many new migrant settlers in Australia face the additional challenge of learning the English language - a challenge compounded for older learners who typically acquire new language at a slower rate than their children, and who do not have schooling as an option.

belong's community-based English language classes delivered from the Acacia Ridge Community Centre offer a vital opportunity for learners of all ages to practice their English and make connections in a safe, friendly and welcoming setting.

An average of 15 learners a week were engaged this year.

In addition to supporting people's language development, the classes offer a vital platform for people to make new friends and build their networks. In many cases, the friendships participants make with each other and our volunteer teachers are their very first as they settle into the Australian community.

Citizenship Test Classes

Our Citizenship Test Classes support community members with their preparations to apply for Australian Citizenship. The program assists migrant settlers to develop their understanding of Australian history, culture, civics, rights, responsibilities and the democratic process. On average, 15 people participated in these weekly classes this year.

A Special Thank You

While all our volunteers are amazing, we are especially indebted to the support of two volunteers who are the lifeblood of our English Language and Citizenship Test Classes.

Huge thanks to **Collette Crossley** (Citizenship classes) and **Gaylene Faggoter** (English classes) who enhanced the lives of dozens of community members through their weekly dedication to these vital programs!



VOLUNTEERS THE HEART OF *belong*



CITIZENSHIP TEST CLASSES PREPARE PEOPLE FOR CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION



ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES ENHANCE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION



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

The Social Space: 21 Clifton Street, Moorooka QLD 4105

Ph: (07) 3277 4893 | Fax: (07) 3275 3656 | Email: info@belong.org.au | www.belong.org.au | ABN 22 197 917 478