

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submitted by:	THRIVE Logan
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Executive Summary

Highlighted in this Submission are insights, experiences and learnings gleaned from a combination of delivering the Queensland Government Funded “Thrive Logan Project” for the last 2 years, combined with 30 years of extensive knowledge and firsthand delivery and leadership experience of working within the Settlement, Employment, Youth, Women and Community Service sectors. Volunteering, especially with newly arrived migrants and refugees, has featured significantly in this work and has provided an opportunity to identify and speak to some of the key issues and untapped opportunities this important Australian value brings to our state and nation as a result of leaning in to and benefiting from our diverse populations.

Further recognition and supported activation of volunteering in the Logan, and more broadly Queensland context, sheds light on what greater results and improved satisfaction can be harvested from increased investment and capacity building into volunteering resources, training, practices and policies.

Volunteering for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) women and youth is a key focus of this Submission, pointing out the immense social and economic benefits extracted when efforts and contributions are supported more effectively through the delivery of both funded and unfunded opportunities to participate. Some of these benefits include:

- Increased community connection
- Greater social cohesion
- Increased cultural harmony
- Pathway building towards economic participation and success
- Stronger and more resilient communities working together in unity to combat social issues and challenges through volunteering efforts
- Women leading and giving back to their own cultural communities both as leaders and contributing members
- Greater inclusion in the broader mainstream volunteer agencies and with other volunteers
- Cultural capacity building to ensure volunteer placements are safe, inclusive, welcoming and build positive people to people relationships in serving local communities and causes
- Community voice and lived experience volunteers to shape and build a volunteering platform that is meaningful and contributes to the impact volunteering can have on people’s lives and within communities, especially disadvantaged communities such as Logan City
- Reduces social isolation and contributes to improved health, mental health and wellbeing
- Language and engagement skills are enhanced with increased confidence to communicate and take an active role outside traditional cultural participation activities
- Training targeting both CALD volunteers and the broader Australian born volunteer base to build increased cultural diversity and acceptance within mainstream agencies and placements
- Young people identify and participate in volunteering activities outside restrictive cultural constraints
- Volunteering is made interesting and connects young people to positive community experiences and opportunities
- Young people seize the opportunities offered to build networks and career opportunities from their participation in volunteering placements
- Community Leaders connecting across cultures and within mainstream community

Background “Thrive Logan Project” Volunteering

Delivery of the Thrive Logan project has focused closely on the paid and unpaid work offered by service agencies, volunteer groups and community leaders and groups who provide support, assistance and connection within the Logan community to those who require additional assistance to engage, participate and be supported to enjoy better social, health, recreational and economic outcomes. The project works closely with those who represent community voice and have lived experiences with issues such as Domestic, Sexual and Family Violence (DFSV); Language, Literacy, Educational and Employment barriers; Case Management and Community Capacity Building to address reduced opportunities to connect with and gain access to services and programs that advance their success in life and address some of their complex and entrenched barriers to participating in all areas of life and work.

Description “Thrive Logan Project”

Thrive Logan represents a powerful opportunity to review and provide feedback on the service system operating in the Logan region. Through providing leadership, facilitation and coordination, the Thrive Logan team works to:

- Address social isolation and loneliness;
- Improve economic participation;
- Empower local women;
- Work with Multicultural youth; and
- Build community capacity.

In doing so, the project identifies duplication in services across the region and enhances the community's capacity to respond.

The project is funded via the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety. Thrive Logan provide regular reports and updates to the Department.

Our Approach

Thrive Logan achieves these outcomes via extensive community consultation to build a picture of service need and service offering. Accessing existing networks, reports, previous consultations, and working with those with lived experience, in particular CALD women, youth and community leaders, who are part of the service system assists in building a shared picture of overlap and opportunity.

It contributes to these objectives by coordinating key stakeholders to identify service gaps and duplication and then explore opportunities to achieve common goals. The project's stakeholder engagement approach involves placing the community's voice at its centre and bringing together partners from across all levels of government, industry, education and community to co-design interventions that make an impact. It considers issues at the system level, and at the user level. Regardless of where impact is sought, it is informed by community voice. Community voice includes CALD Community Leaders and Groups who are either unfunded or receive limited resources to assist their diverse community members with a range of complex issues including DFSV, social and economic engagement and participation, as well as bringing rich and culturally diverse sporting, food and performance experiences into the broader community. They are volunteer-based supporters within the local service and social context, often being referred to as the “Third Shift”, working at paid jobs, playing their daily family roles and then being on call 24/7 for their community members, as well as holding grassroots community organisational roles and responsibilities.

Placing community voice at the centre of our approach is distinctive to this project. A focus on working with CALD family members and community leaders as end users and putting their voice at the centre of decision making and problem solving is a unique process.

Thrive Logan works with a significant number of partners and connects with the project's influential and high profile "Core Advisory Group" membership, alongside engaging and leveraging the skills, expertise and senior level stakeholders who hold broad representation from across Government, Industry and Peak Bodies as the "Expert Panel" to identify and prioritise areas of focus and impact. Working closely with the community and partners, the project tests, trials and evaluates new ways of working to extend service reach, improve collaboration, boost productivity and participation, and deliver more positive outcomes.



Observations and Findings to Date

The outcomes of Thrive Logan's approach is intended to be iterative in nature. As such, findings are being gathered across the process. Over the initial two years of this three year funded project, the work has already yielded the following observations and findings:

- Establishment of a Settlement Provider Network representing the 5 main funded Settlement Agencies operating in Logan to support our CALD members and groups/leaders; SSI, Multicultural Australia (MA), QPASTT, IWAA, Multilink; and to include the small and emerging youth Settlement Support Group, Ethni
- Economic Participation Working Group supported by the Brisbane South East Local Jobs Taskforce (funded by DEWR) with three levels of Government representation, industry and employers and community members
- DFSV Project Case Study and co-delivery of a DFSV DJAG funded project being delivered by The Good Shift in partnership with the Thrive Logan team looking at early intervention and prevention strategies where funding for those women-led, volunteer based Women's groups and organisations might be sourced; involving the establishment of an Intermediary Platform to assist small women's groups and leaders to obtain resources with the back of house support needed to focus on delivery of support while other funding functions are held by a backbone entity, an

Intermediary – potential to leverage philanthropic funding and build sector and service agency partnerships

- Community Capacity Building (CCB) leading to the introduction of a Community of Practice (CoP) for Community Groups and Leaders to look at securing resources, building governance capability and delivery of support at the coal face level by adopting intermediary platforms to assist with complex funding issues and constraints for our unfunded community-led organisations and groups – potential to leverage philanthropic funding and build sector and service agency partnerships
- Youth participation and community involvement in the co-design activities associated with establishing a Social Prescribing Pilot model being delivered from Crestmead PCYC in Logan and building an across Settlement Service Provider and Logan Council Youth Coalition that combines the current individualised way youth volunteering occurs

Each of the above core focus areas are yielding results that has clearly highlight the key role our CALD volunteers take and the significant contributions they make, including women and youth. It also signals the intersection that volunteering has and can have on building stronger social and economic pathways, thus building financial success and reducing social isolation and loneliness.

Improving the Service by Focusing on the System – A Funding Community of Practice

In terms of highlighting the volunteer efforts and needs of our CALD community, the outcomes focused on in our final year through the work of Thrive Logan, is to establish and build a sustainable Funding Community of Practice (CoP) Model. The need for this CoP was borne from feedback across funding providers, service providers, community leaders and users around the mismatch and overlap in the way in which funding is accessed within the community.

This CoP will explore how funds are dispersed to provide local solutions in the region. By bringing together key stakeholders from Departments, philanthropy, service providers, and user groups, the CoP will operate as a structured approach to building governance practices, aligning groups to other parts of the government, Peak Bodies and funded systems and will act as a clearing house for funding decisions and opportunities. It will take a structured approach across a range of different areas, to consider:

- Why funds are required;
- Where funds are provided;
- What they are provided for;
- When funding is provided;
- Who is funding provided for.



By testing opportunities against these questions, and by challenging traditional ways of working and accessing support the CoP will offer new and different approaches to supporting activities in our area. Through this lens individuals and organisations will be connected with relevant funded supports, guided to access grant assistance, supported to build their capacity, or connected with existing services in the region reducing duplication and improving efficiency in how resources are allocated. This process will bring those volunteer based, unfunded and grassroots groups and leaders into the most appropriate and accessible funding scope. The work needed to prepare and support these leaders and groups to seek, secure and appropriately deliver and report on funded initiatives is what is sought as part of this CoP.

Improving the System by Focusing on the User – A Case Study Approach

Women's Power of Inspiration (WPI) was founded by Logan woman Esperance Nyirabarahinyuza, with a focus on working with African and other culturally diverse women living in the local area as an unfunded, volunteer-based community leader. Her work evolved as a result of identifying a need to connect women with each other, to assist them to navigate language, training and work opportunities and to assist them to make their new home and lives safe and secure. She does this in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner which is not only nurturing and inclusive but is connected to and supported by others in the sector, across community and within Government and the system.

WPI came to the attention of Thrive Logan because of referrals and connections in the community highlighting identified gaps in service access and support from within the funded system. It was noted, that despite having no external funding, in less than two years, Esperance and her team of volunteers has engaged with over 200 women in the African community locally, providing them with opportunities to build their social, health, communication and economic opportunities. She does this by providing English language programs, financial literacy training, sewing skills, employment preparation and job referral skills and development of other supports and activities, including dealing with complex case management issues and fundraising to sustain her much needed and highly valued support.

She was using her own personal financial resources to deliver these community-based programs and assistance until recently when Thrive Logan was able to support her to secure a Council facility at peppercorn rent.

These relentless and tireless efforts have greatly assisted to build language skills, confidence, practical job support and have contributed significantly to addressing issues of social isolation and disconnection for highly disadvantaged and marginalised CALD women. Women now are receiving digital devices and training from pro bono and philanthropic sources, obtaining jobs, receiving in house professional services and support via her engagement with the formal and funded government and service provider sectors.

She has successfully secured funding, including Gambling Community Fund Grant, Bendigo Bank grant, Mental Health and Well Being grant, Logan City Council premises and funding, Volunteer Qld grant and other small funding amounts to put towards her own supreme volunteer efforts.

WPI's efforts to build economic independence and reduce social isolation made them a perfect example of the kind of community service for consideration as a case study in our project. Additionally it highlights the significant contributions and outcomes achieved by our hard working, dedicated and selfless volunteers.

Through working alongside WPI Thrive Logan has been able to identify:

- Needs of community members, particularly women in the African community within Logan;
- Barriers to accessing the service sector to address these needs;
- Overlap with other services in the region;
- Partnerships and connections which can be activated to extend the impact of WPI's work; and
- Issues of duplication which can be resolved through strong connection locally.

The other issue which has arisen is the reliance on unfunded volunteer support from members of her small band of helpers who themselves are finding work and leaving to take up paid roles. Her success is resulting in large numbers of women on a waiting list wanting to join because she is meeting their unmet needs and is able to do so with trust, language, cultural sensitivity, actually achieving learning and outcomes outside a funded service system. Her capacity to respond and meet this growing need for her targeted and person-centred delivery is restricted due to space and human resource limitations.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Volunteering

In working with members of the CALD community over the last two years in our Thrive Logan Project, especially women and youth, it has become evident the key role volunteering can and does play in building greater participation and more enjoyable and meaningful experiences includes:

- Social Cohesion
- Improving Language Skills
- Connecting people to the System
- Building Skills leading into employment opportunities
- Preparing people for work pathways and planning for financial success
- Across cultural community group connections

- Volunteering in Mainstream organisations and placements
- Training within the volunteering context – both preparing CALD volunteers for the Australian setting as well as training mainstream volunteers and placements agencies to be culturally competent, welcoming and inclusive

Thrive Logan seeks to expand on its existing work alongside volunteer and community groups and leaders to partner with relevant service agencies, government departments and to align with like-minded grassroots groups and leaders to co-design and deliver a more coordinated and collaborative volunteer network, where sharing of constricting resources, both financial and human, can be combined to benefit from a joined up effort across our multicultural leaders and groups.

CALD Youth Volunteering

Impact on Community Leaders and Volunteer Groups

Recommendations