



Strengthening
our place



Place-based in Fraser Coast

A case study - How the Butchulla people are re-visioning an ancient rite of passage

QCOSS
Queensland Council
of Social Service

Queensland
**Family & Child
Commission**
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QCROSS and the Queensland Family and Child Commission acknowledges the Butchulla people as the original inhabitants of the area now known as the Fraser Coast and recognise this unique culture as part of the cultural heritage of all Australians. We pay our respect to the Butchulla Elders; past, present and future.

Setting the scene

In 2016 the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) committed to partnering with the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) to deliver Strengthening our place. This place based initiative builds the service capacity and capability of the child and family support sector in Central Queensland in two sites – Capricornia and Fraser Coast. The Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) has been undertaking this work with QFCC since 2016.

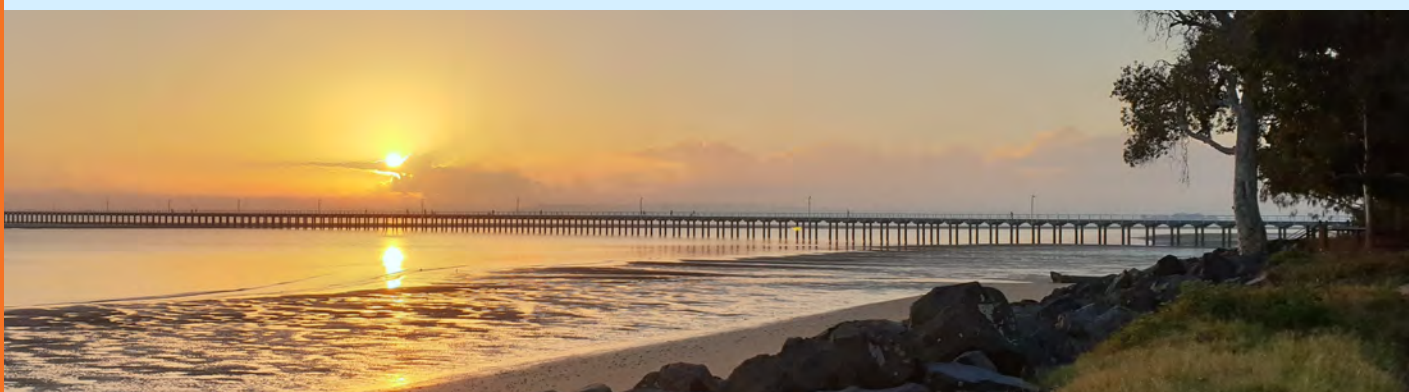
This case study showcases an important element of place-based work and how a project came to happen. It also demonstrates just what can be achieved when a government body, a peak body and community work together.

About Strengthening our place

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC), in their Strengthening our Sector Strategy (2016-2019), highlighted the need for collaboration across the sector to create a responsive and sustainable service system across the child and family support sector.

In July 2016 QCOSS partnered with QFCC to develop and implement an initiative for place-based sector development in Central Queensland. This work engages communities to empower local networks of services to prioritise initiatives in partnership with community to:

- Build service capacity and capabilities.
- Strengthen workforce to respond to a changing service environment.
- Identify joint solutions and pilot collaborative partnerships to shift the way children and families experience interacting with professional across the sector.



Strengthening our place

Phase two

Strengthening our place - phase two (2017) brought together a leadership group which met regularly to prioritise issues and explore solutions. It was a collaboration that considered projects that would progress the objectives of *Strengthening our place both* building the capability of the sector and to shift the experience of families and children interacting with the services.

The group included members of the community, and representatives from:

- Fraser Coast Regional Council
- Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre
- Local Level Alliance
- Wide Bay Womens Health Centre
- Red Cross
- Seniors Legal Service
- Central Queensland Indigenous Development
- Butchulla Mens' Business Aboriginal Corporation
- Headspace

Comments from the leadership group

What do you hope will come out of the place-based work being undertaken on the Fraser Coast?

"Greater collaboration to identify and implement successful strategies for the issues we face. It will also allow us to approach funding bodies and research organisations as 'one'."

How has place-based work created solutions to local issues?

"This work has connected agencies and not for profits and encouraged the sharing of information, collaboration on activities and future planning. Specific solutions to ongoing issues have been identified and some implemented."



QCOSS and place-based work

While there is not one agreed definition of place-based work QCOSS defines the approach as bringing together key stakeholders in a place to address entrenched disadvantage and community need by harnessing the vision, resources and opportunities of community. QCOSS believes that place-based approaches should be accessible to communities, supporting their vision and enacting long term, systemic improvements. While traditional community development methods have harnessed the strengths of communities for many years, place-based approaches include a focus on measuring against community outcomes and driving changes in investment.

All over Australia there are communities, organisations and governments facilitating place-based work, all sitting on a spectrum of investment, focus and intended outcomes. QCOSS' contribution to the body of work and evidence supporting place-based approaches has been through facilitation of place-based initiatives, consultation with community, and through conversation across governments.

In 2018 Minister for Communities and Minister for Disability Services and Senior, Hon Coralee O'Rourke, and Mark Henley (QCOSS) co-hosted two place-based roundtables in Queensland. These roundtables brought together those who are currently driving place-based approaches, representatives from community sector and peak bodies, policy and research specialists and academics, and representatives from Government to contribute to a passionate discussion about Queensland's future of place based work. These discussions evidenced the current commitment to approaches that empower local communities to lead positive change, and essential data about the experiences of community in place, and those facilitating place-based work.

Collective Impact and place-based

Collective impact work is an effective and growing approach being used both internationally and in Australia. While place-based work is not collective impact specifically, collective impact is one methodology which QCOSS considers to fall under the umbrella of place based approaches.

Principles

- engaging with Traditional Custodians, Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- being citizen-led
- being inclusive
- being assets and strengths focused
- being informed
- committing to place
- doing no harm

Features





The story of place

The Butchulla people are the Traditional Owners of K'gari (Fraser Island) and have been the custodians of the area that is now known as the Fraser Coast for more than 5,000 years, perhaps as many as 50,000 years.

Butchulla people lived in harmony with the seasons and the land and sea, maintaining a balance between spiritual, social and family connections.

Today the Butchulla people continue to walk the cultural pathway of their ancestors, whom they believe have lived on this country since the beginning of the Dreaming.

Butchulla people want their message – of care and respect for the land – to reach all people living and visiting on K'gari and the Fraser Coast.

Connecting with the Traditional Owners

QCOSS met with the Elders of the Butchulla and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community and asked them to describe the issues that effect them and their families.

- Many older people within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community feel stress when their family members are on drugs (an escalating problem), they feel powerless.
- Carers of young people, either kinship or non-kinship find it hard to connect those young people to their own cultural roots.
- Older people feel isolated from younger generations (particularly their own grandchildren), because they don't know what those young people are experiencing, therefore they don't know how to help.

The importance of establishing relationships with traditional custodians

“Including Traditional Owners shows respect and acknowledgment – actions speak louder than words”



**“The wisdom of Elders
creates the future”**



Sense making and local engagement

In his role on the Place-based Leadership Group, Butchulla Elder Uncle Glen Miller further articulated the issues faced by Elders, both Indigenous and non-indigenous; of feeling isolated from the younger generations and not knowing how to support them in their transition to adulthood.

He pointed out that in particular, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and men don't know their heritage or have a sense of who they are/where they want to go with their lives.

Alongside the people who came up with this project (needs work on words) QCOSS met with the Elders of the Butchulla and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and facilitated a conversation to draw out the issues that effect them and their families.

They described the following:

- Many older people within the this community feel stress when their family members are on drugs which is an escalating problem and they feel powerless to do anything about it.
- Carers of young people, either kinship or non-kinship find it hard to connect those young people to their own cultural roots.
- Older people feel isolated from younger generations (particularly their own grandchildren), because they don't know what those young people are experiencing, therefore they don't know how to help.

Identifying a solution

Uncle Glen suggested that a possible solution was to provide a Boys Program that would provide:

- a rite of passage for Indigenous and non-Indigenous boys in the Fraser Coast region
- leadership/facilitator training for local men so that a boys program could ultimately be run by Butchulla and Fraser Coast men and become sustainable into the future
- equal opportunity for indigenous and non-indigenous boys to be involved in cross cultural development within the community of the Fraser Coast.

The voice of experience:

Brad Crosbie (Where Youth Live Dreams Projects) believes that a program targeting young Indigenous children has the potential to decrease Indigenous youth mental health issues while increasing the involvement of Indigenous youth in cultural learning.

He believed that the boys who would have the most benefit would be those who:

were at risk of leaving school and/or home prematurely
had experienced family, school based and/or societal dysfunction contributing to the formation of unsafe behaviours and anti-social activity, and/or had the potential to self-harm and suicide
were suspended or at risk of suspension or exclusion from school
had entered or were at risk of entering the Juvenile Justice System.

Enter the content expert



Uncle Glen and other men from the Fraser Coast approached the CEO of The Rites of Passage Institute, Dr Arne Rubinstein to support them in developing The Making of Men: Bringing Back the Butchulla.

Dr Rubinstein and his team have built their Rites of Passage program over 20 years of research and practice. They have worked with over 100,000 participants globally.

Dr Rubinstein undertook to work with the Fraser Coast men to design, create and deliver a Rite of Passage program for Indigenous and non-indigenous boys from the Fraser Coast, based on Butchulla Culture.

Formation of an Advisory Group for the program

QCOSS facilitated the formation of an Advisory Group, made up of representatives from:

- Butchulla Men's Business Association
- Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation
- Where Youth Live Dreams (WYLD)
- Qld Police Service
- University of Sunshine Coast
- Central Queensland Indigenous Development (CQID)
- Fraser Coast Regional Council
- Urangan State High School

The purpose of this advisory group was to progress the development and delivery of the Making of Men program.

What's next for the Boys Program

The Advisory Group for the Boys Program is currently seeking funding for the delivery of:

- Leadership Training for facilitators who will deliver the program
- Facilitation by Dr Arne Rubinstein from The Rites of Passage Institute of an inaugural "The Making of Men – Bringing Back the Butchulla" program, including the delivery of:
 - A Program Manual
 - Research & Evaluation Framework
 - Further assistance in registration and ongoing delivery of the program
 - Support for a sustainable model of delivery that will provide ongoing delivery of the program.



How the Place-based approached has worked for Butchulla men

An agreed place

In July 2016, QCOSS partnered with QFCC to pilot place-based work in Hervey Bay

Local engagement

QCOSS met with the Elders of the Butchulla and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community and asked them to describe the issues that effect them and their families.

In his role on the Place-based Leadership Group, Butchulla Elder Uncle Glen Miller further articulated the issues faced by Elders, both Indigenous and non-indigenous; of feeling isolated from the younger generations and not knowing how to support them in their transition to adulthood.

Focus on assets and opportunities

QCOSS facilitated the formation of an Advisory Group to progress the development of a boys program

Integration & outcome framework

Uncle Glen and other men from the Fraser Coast approached the The Rites of Passage Institute (Dr Arne Rubinstein) for support in developing The Making of Men: Bringing Back the Butchulla program.

Shared vision or agreed issue

Funding being sought for the delivery of:

- leadership training for facilitators who will deliver the boys program
- delivery and facilitation of the program including:
 - a program manual
 - research and evaluation framework

What would you say about 'place-based'?

"It's about relationships ... it's about making contact with traditional custodians ... because they know their community, and they can push you out to other services or organisations that can benefit and who can help you"

**Aunty Kristina Hatfield (Darumbal Enterprises)
Rockhampton**

What have you learned?

"Understand the community and spend time getting to know the main players" James Mundy (J M Community Consultancy)

It's all about relationships: "form good local relationships, they know their community best" Aunty Kristina (Darumbal Enterprises)

"Work to connect agencies and not for profits and encourage the sharing of information, collaboration on activities and future planning" Kirsti Kee (Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre)



Thanks to

Elders of the Butchulla and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community

The participants of the Place-based Leadership Group

The men of the Advisory Group for The Making of Men: Bringing Back the Butchulla program.