

## Queensland Neighbourhood Centres: Building blocks of Queensland's communities (Immediate investment of \$5.565 million)

Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCC) are a vital piece of social infrastructure, yet they are currently the lowest funded social service. Numerous reports, consultations and research projects have demonstrated the vital role and positive impact of neighbourhood centres in their communities, and the increased place-based benefits NCCs could provide with adequate resourcing (See; IMS report - QFCA and QCOSS 2017, Program Framework for Neighbourhood Centres - DCDSS 2017, Strengthening Good Practice in QLD - Griffith University Policy Innovation Hub 2018, Reporting and Measurement Framework – QFCA 2020, QLD NCC Survey – QFCA 2020).

Despite this evidence, baseline funding for NCCs in Queensland is just \$120,000. Furthermore, there is disparity between centre funding levels and costs of operation across the state.

QFCA is seeking to redress this imbalance so that all centres across Queensland can continue to provide high levels of community support.

### QFCA Budget asks

1. Lift all centres to a minimum base funding level of \$170,000 annually. This is an uplift of \$5.24 million in this budget, to raise base funding to an equitable level for 116 under resourced NCCs. This increase will create increased capacity to respond to the current challenges and opportunities the sector is experiencing in terms of the COVID19 crisis, contributing to sector reform processes and progressing place-based citizen-led responses in local communities.

2. Increase funding for the peak body for Neighbourhood and Community Centres, QFCA, to \$290,000. This will help to ensure a voice and support for NCCs across Queensland. Comparable peak bodies are funded between \$300,000 to \$370,000 per annum; QFCA has funding of \$150,000. This amount is simply not designed to support the core functions of a peak body now or into the future.

With a lifted, stable base funding, QFCA will be able to:

- **Foster Sector Leadership:** Expand from 1.2 FTE permanent staff to 2.4 FTE staff. This will greatly expand QFCA's capacity to nurture relationships with NCCs across Queensland, enhance their strengths, and work collaboratively across the sector to progress a shared vision, address key challenges, promote peer support and attract resourcing.
- **Expand Workforce Development:** Co-develop a structured suite of learning opportunities to foster sector innovation, leadership and workforce development. This would include; regular workshops that showcase, challenge and extend NCC skills and practise frameworks; an online resource library and members forum; facilitated opportunities for peer mentoring; and short courses tailored to the different needs of the workforce e.g. new managers, community development workers and governance committees.
- **Build Evidence Base:** Expand the Annual Neighbourhood Sector Survey and build the digital infrastructure for shared data, research and analysis, delivering deep insights into the NCC sector and the communities we serve.
- **Raise Sector Profile:** Fund a specialised communications role to raise the profile of NCCs across communities, all levels of government, business and philanthropy. This will foster sector awareness leading to increased investment that delivers increased value to communities.
- **Expand Reach:** Develop infrastructure and leverage our base funding to expand support for the sector.



3. Provide first year project funds of \$220,000 for QFCA to implement the NCC Sector Measurement and Reporting Framework across 3 years in collaboration with NCCs and the Department. This resource was codeveloped in 2020 in collaboration with a representative sample of neighbourhood centres across Queensland, all NCC peak bodies across Australia, and stakeholders including CSIA and Griffith. This would set a benchmark for NCCs in the coming decade and, together with QFCA's Annual NCC Survey, illuminate the true state of the sector and provide empirical evidence to inform sector development and resourcing.

To ensure strong sector leadership and buy-in in the upcoming sector reforms, it is vital to acknowledge and resource the NCC sector – both through capitalising on the momentum and relationship-base of QFCA membership and increasing the capacity of individual centres who are attempting to meet the increasingly complex demands of their communities on a low baseline. Some initial wins based on extensive previous studies and sector collaboration will generate good will from the sector to engage in this next phase of sector reform.

We stand at an important turning point in our sector, now is the time to build a robust and powerful platform to continue the ongoing support and resilience building for all communities in Queensland.