

AT A GLANCE



Target Participants
Whole of community



Aim
To build strengths and resilience in the Cairns West community through initiatives driven and designed by locals



Organisations Involved
Community Partners include Cairns Safer Streets Taskforce, Local Neighbourhood Centres, Local Community and Faith based organisations, Local State Primary and High Schools



Location
Manunda, Manoora and Mooroolbool, Cairns



Funding
Department of Social Services' Community Resilience Grant 2018-2021



CASE STUDY

OUR PLACE

Centacare Far North Queensland

Centacare FNQ's 'Our Place' project provides opportunities for communities from diverse backgrounds to have conversations, create connections, build relationships and grow their own social initiatives.

About the program

Since 2018, Centacare FNQ has been facilitating the Our Place project; an assets based, community driven project. Our Place creates spaces and opportunities for communities from diverse backgrounds to have conversations, create connections, build relationships and grow their own social initiatives.

It is a grassroots project that has seen sustainable social initiatives growing including those supporting diverse youth, families, social and environmental justice, creative arts and cultural unity and promotion.

Examples of initiatives developed through Our Place include:

- Online cultural tours showcasing local Indigenous knowledge and culture
- Multicultural Fashion Extravaganza
- Business workshops
- Cultural story-telling workshops
- Dynamic Young Leaders program
- Musical cohesion

The Our Place project is community driven and provides a platform for community to come together, explore their strengths, and build connections—reigniting community spirit through facilitating.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Our Place became a vital tool supporting community safety and wellbeing. The project's key community partners collaborated immediately to ensure that everyone in community was receiving crucial health messages and could access community supports. A range of stakeholders delivered wellbeing checks on high risk community members ensuring information was accessible and in language. This played a pivotal role in ensuring zero COVID-19 cases across their humanitarian entrant communities locally.



The Centacare FNQ Our Place project team had to adapt to an online environment, and the Our Place **#wearecairnswest** Facebook page became a vital platform to share community announcements as well as a place to connect and celebrate. With the most intense period of community lockdown being over the Easter long weekend, numerous diverse faith leaders were able to send messages of hope, comfort and guidance to the whole of community at a much needed time.

The Our Place project continues to offer a digital platform for interactive community engagement with ongoing community projects and groups. Overall, the Our Place project continues to support an incredible level of community reach and engagement, with over 13,000 people interacting with the digital platform throughout March & April 2020. The Centacare FNQ Our Place project continues to play a key role in the successful settlement of newly arrived migrants in the Cairns region.

Challenges

There was great scepticism towards the project at first as these neighbourhoods had always been approached from a 'deficiency, need and wants' angle. Further, the community was used to organisations delivering services based on deficiencies. This project was not to deliver a service, it was to get the community to grow their own sustainable social initiatives.

Centacare FNQ went into the community and asked questions – What are the strengths of your community? What fires you to take action in your community? What are your gifts of the head (knowledge), hands (practical skills) and heart (your passions) that you are willing to share with others? These questions really threw people at first.

Centacare had community members as a part of the project team (community builders) who went out into community and supported meaningful community conversations. This was an important aspect of changing attitudes and changing narratives to a more positive and united tune.

Key Learnings

This experience has generated the following key learnings for Centacare FNQ:

- 1.** Meaningful and lasting community change originates from within and local residents are the best experts in activating community change.
- 2.** Communities respond creatively when the focus is on resources, capacities, strengths and aspirations rather than deficiencies and needs.
- 3.** The strong base of the project, and adapting it to a digital format was essential for delivering crucial messages and community support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

More information

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/OurPlaceCairnsWest/>

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