



common
ground

QUEENSLAND

ending homelessness

ANNUAL REPORT
2019 - 2020

Home, safe and sound





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Supportive housing principles

The Common Ground model of supportive housing is a proven and cost effective solution to ending homelessness. Supportive housing provides safe, affordable and stable housing that is intentionally linked to individualised support services that focus on tenancy sustainment. Supportive housing can be delivered in single site high or low density developments or scattered site housing.

Brisbane Common Ground is Queensland's first supportive housing initiative it has been developed and delivered in line with a set of validated principles.

DESIGN

A thoughtfully designed and well-maintained positive home environment that includes community spaces and opportunities for the wider community to participate. An asset for the whole community.

PERMANENCY & AFFORDABILITY

Housing is permanent, affordable and self-contained.

TENANCY MIX

There is a mix of tenants with a proportion having experienced homelessness and some who have not. This mix ensures a vibrant and diverse building community.

SAFETY

A Concierge service is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to ensure a welcoming yet controlled access to the building.

SERVICES FOR TENANTS

An on-site support provider offers a holistic, tenancy-focused service to those who require support to remain housed.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Each element of supportive housing aims to create the greatest possible degree of empowerment and independence for individuals as well as a thriving community for tenants and neighbours.

COMMON GROUND QUEENSLAND

Vision

Ending homelessness a person at a time with the communities in which we operate.

Mission

To **create supportive homes** through effective public, private and community partnerships that respond to people's needs and improve well-being and connectedness.



Chair's report

The domination of COVID-19 in the second part of the financial year, almost overshadowed the good work achieved in the first half.

But Common Ground Queensland (CGQ) remained busy during this time, with business as usual to enable our established supportive housing service. We also worked hard with our Micah Projects and Department of Housing and Public Works' partners to create a pilot distributed supportive housing service for families. The project is a twelve month pilot supplying 20 supportive homes to families at risk of entering the child protection system. The project has been in the planning phase for quite some time and has now been actioned. Although this is a small increase to the existing available supportive housing stock, it is still an important addition nonetheless. This is the first time CGQ has ventured beyond our established service at South Brisbane. At CGQ we believe strongly in the supportive housing model, mostly because the data tells us it works and the financial data tells us it's a positive investment for our state government partners. So we are pleased with the fruits of our and our partners' efforts and we will strive for success and maintain the hope that similar projects will follow.

The new supportive housing project is an opportunity to provide people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with a safe home. I use that word 'home' intentionally as it means more than being housed. Safety plays a big part in forming housing into homes and safety is more than just bars on windows and security screen doors. 'Safe' includes security of tenure, knowing that provided you meet your obligations as a tenant, with necessary support services as required, you won't be evicted. That level of security and consequent safety isn't available in our private rental market but can be provided by us in the supportive and community housing component of the market. That's something more of which to be proud and in which to believe.

In the coming year, I am hopeful of allowing time and energy for CGQ to engage in some policy and advocacy work on this security of residential tenancy issue. I am certain we can do better than security of tenure at the investor's discretion and not just in the supportive housing sector.

New supportive housing opportunities and an enhanced policy analysis and advocacy effort are both matters of strategic importance to CGQ. Over this past year we have engaged in a first principles review of our five (5) year strategic plan. Significant areas for strategic focus emerging from our review are the desire to:

- Serve more people. That means growing the suite of available supportive housing options focusing on housing the chronically homeless and those at risk of homelessness;
- Do more with those we already serve. CGQ sees daily the impacts on our tenants of rationing of essential public health and well-being services. They simply frequently miss out. We aspire to find the means to have less missing out in the future; and
- Engage more fully in advocacy for more supportive housing and on other matters impacting the lives of those individuals we serve.

And after all this doing and thinking, the second half of the year and the coronavirus pandemic are still with us. CGQ has had to make adjustments. Our tenants have had to adjust. This has happened. People have done as asked and we have done OK within our small but important part of the pandemic world. I am grateful for the resolve and quality of leadership received from our Queensland Premier during these times. Without her leadership and determination the task would have been much more difficult.

I am humbled by the work of the CGQ team and Board over the past year. We continue to do well at what we aim to achieve and we have had success in expanding so we can do more with those we serve. I am equally humbled by those who support us in our work. In the course of the year we have asked our partners for much and they have delivered. HWL Ebsworth Lawyers warrant special mention. Please accept our deep and enduring thanks for your generous support.

And then there must be a final thanks to our tenants for trusting us, for engaging with us and for continuing with your efforts to make Brisbane Common Ground your home. I have been the chairman of CGQ for long enough now for some tenants to know me by name and to greet me when I come to the building. That is very satisfying; it has the feel of something that can happen in a safe home.

Peter Pearce

Chairman,

Common Ground Queensland





CEO's report

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted to many the importance of home and has provided a further opportunity for society to recognise the value of housing as a health response and basic human right. The pandemic has increased visibility of the number of individuals and families in our community who do not have safe and permanent housing and highlighted the increased vulnerability faced by those who are experiencing homelessness. A chronic shortfall of social and affordable housing has made responding to the emergency a difficult and expensive exercise, one that has been necessary to safeguard the whole community. We have had to face the consequences of years of divestment and underinvestment in homelessness solutions and instead rely on costly and inferior crisis responses.

Of course, there are also silver linings that emerge from these unfortunate situations; we have seen the resilience of the building community at Brisbane Common Ground and the intrinsic value of the supportive housing model in enabling the safety, health and wellbeing of tenants; another positive outcome from an investment that was directed toward a proven solution to homelessness. I would like to especially thank tenants; Nilima Harjal, Shakena Gyemore, Michelle Williams and Sharlee Hammond who have worked as part of our Property Maintenance Team and alongside our Concierge and Operations Teams to conduct regular cleaning of touch points, lifts and communal areas throughout the building. This has been an essential part of our strategy to maintain safety at Brisbane Common Ground and I know from the feedback received from tenants that they have appreciated the effort that has gone into this work.

The COVID-19 supplement from the Federal Government provided a welcome and much needed increase in the level of benefits paid to those who are unable to work. There has long been recognition that the \$40 per day that people receive without this supplement forces them to live well below the poverty line. At 30 June we reported zero rent arrears, a testament to the outcomes possible when people are provided with a more adequate level of income. We are hopeful that the rate will not return to \$40 per day when the supplement is removed. CGQ is supporting the advocacy being led by QCOSS and other peak bodies to permanently raise the rate.

Back in 2015, CGQ received funding from the Queensland Charitable Foundation to conduct research into providing supportive housing for families who are caught in the homelessness and child protection cycle. We conducted this research project in partnership with Micah Projects Limited (MPL), the Department of Housing and Public Works

and the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women. The project also included broad engagement with local homelessness and family service providers.

I am delighted to report that in June this year we formally commenced a 12 month pilot for a scattered site Supportive Housing for Families (SH4F) program that will provide 20 families with safe and affordable housing and a specialised family support service provided by MPL. The model for the pilot has been informed by our research and will be formally evaluated by the University of Queensland. The funding for the pilot has been provided by the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works. We are looking forward to working with the families and our project partners to deliver what we hope will be a successful and replicable model for strengthening families and keeping them together.

As we come to the end of our eighth year of supportive housing at Brisbane Common Ground we continue to see an increase in tenancy sustainment rates and evidence of the efficacy of our model. I would like to recognise the contribution of tenants and MPL to the success of our building community. During the year CGQ completed our triennial audit and maintained our compliance under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH). We have also continued to benefit from the support of the community with funding provided by the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works and the contributions of our foundational support partners Deloitte, HWL Ebsworth and QPAC.

I would like to sincerely thank our volunteer Board Members and dedicated staff who continue to work toward our mission of ending homelessness one person at a time in the communities in which we operate. I hope that we can all avoid any further negative impacts of the current pandemic and that together we may be able to create more silver linings through increased investment in supportive housing.

Sonya Keep

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sonya Keep". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

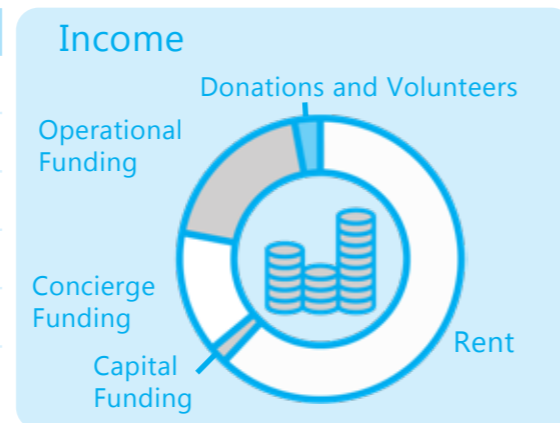
CEO,

Common Ground Queensland



Outcomes for 2019 - 2020

KPI	Target	2019-2020
Bad Debts	<1.5%	0.06%
Rent Foregone	<4%	0.70%
Vacancy Rate	<5%	0.74%
Rent Arrears @ 30 June	<5%	0.00%
Eviction Rate	<7%	5.39%
Evictions to Homelessness	0	0



Our Tenants at 30 June 2020

53% Formerly Homeless Tenants

47% Affordable Housing Tenants

83% Formerly Homeless Tenants

96% Affordable Housing Tenants

55 months Formerly Homeless Tenants

66 months Affordable Housing Tenants

Gender

50% Male, 50% Female

Age

Tenant Exits 2019 - 2020

20 EXITS

Average length of stay for exited tenants:

- 23 months** Formerly Homeless Tenants
- 22 months** Affordable Housing Tenants

Tenancies at Risk

130 Formal responses to tenancies at risk

99.2% Positively resolved

*19 responses remain unresolved as at 30 June 2020

2020 - 2023 Strategic Plan

OBJECTIVES

- Ensure our tenants' needs are met to enable a fulfilling life.
- Provide specialised tenancy management services for supportive and affordable housing tenants.
- Increase the supply of supportive housing services that provide a preventative response for individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

Purposeful diversification and growth:

- Do more with those we serve.
- Serve more people.
- Grow and diversify our income base.

Relational integrity:

Authentic and effective partnerships for purpose.

Focused advocacy:

- For more supportive housing.
- For the wider interests of those we serve.

Operational efficiency and effectiveness:

- High quality tenancy and property management services.
- Achieve tenancy sustainment.
- Robust, fit-for-purpose organisation and organisational systems.

Thank you to Giselle Hodgson and her Strategy and Business Design team from Deloitte for working with our Directors and CEO to develop our new Strategic Plan. John Greig and the team at Deloitte have supported CGQ since our inception to establish and strengthen our work to end homelessness. We value and appreciate their expertise, generosity and continuing commitment.



Feeling settled

James says moving to Brisbane Common Ground provided him with the support he needed without compromising his independence. “I waited quite a while to get in here,” recalls James. “I was living in Dutton Park at a boarding house. Then I found out about this place and once it was described to me, I set my eyes on here. Fullstop!” James’ relief is evident as he explains that a nursing home was looking like his only option to manage his advanced health issues. “But I’m too young for that,” he objects. “I’m only 46.”

James says his counsellor from the PA Hospital pointed him in the right direction when she handed him a copy of an earlier Common Ground Queensland Annual Report. “She said that’s the sort of place you need to be. It’s not a nursing home, it’s independent living, but there’ll be support there for you and I thought that sounded great,” reflects James. “I was probably in the right place at the right time.”

James set the ball in motion and with the assistance of the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) submitted his application. After a year of waiting, he moved into Brisbane Common Ground with his 8 year old Ragdoll cat, Jay Jay.

“It’s coming up to a year now since I moved in,” shares James. “I didn’t want to go anywhere else and I’m so happy since I’ve been here. I love the security of the place. All the staff are great and kind and the nurses check on me. They always ask how you’re going? It’s really nice. Makes you feel good

and the place is really clean all the time,” says James appreciatively.

“I love going up for the community dinners when I can and even during COVID, Micah Projects were delivering meals every day. That was awesome, I never expected something like that.” James pauses for a moment, then adds steadfastly. “And another thing. When I went to hospital, the staff fed Jay Jay for me and even sent me photos to let me know he was OK.”

James is also a fan of the outings and activities organised by Micah Projects’ on-site occupational therapist. “I can’t walk very far these days, but it gets me out,” he says matter-of-factly. A former circuit racing and drift driver, James says a diagnosis of epilepsy and the complications of osteoporosis put the brakes on life. “I used to race cars for a living back in the day. I had a Silvia that I raced – very fast!” His eyes light up. “But when I got diagnosed with epilepsy, my licence was gone so I can’t drive anymore. Plus I’m a mechanic by trade and I can’t work on cars anymore coz of my legs. I’m pretty stifled. That’s where Angie, the OT comes in...she’s great, she tries to get me out and do something different. She’s kept me going here...that’s for sure.”

“All in all I love the place, says James sincerely. “It’s terrific. Everyone’s helped me – the whole team are great. I couldn’t find a better place.”

A welcome change

Sadly, family breakdown and violence contributed to Tiarnie’s circumstances of homelessness. “I was on the street for a really long time, on and off for seven years. I ended up going to Pindari – it was like a stepping stone to getting here,” shares Tiarnie.

Tiarnie researched Brisbane Common Ground online and put her application in. “When I came in for the interview, they showed me my unit. I was really happy with it. It was a good change,” affirms Tiarnie. “I was off the street.” That was 15 months ago and according to Tiarnie it’s the longest time she’s stayed in one place for many years.

Tiarnie says living on the streets is scary and stressful. “I used to stay in stairwells to shops and fire escapes because it was freezing in winter, just to get out of the wind. I just did what I had to do,” she discloses.

Tiarnie says she appreciates the security of Brisbane Common Ground and has made friends in the building. She also enjoys going to the weekly community meals and...watching the fireworks from the rooftop when they’re on. “I’m not looking forward to moving anywhere else soon. I’m happy where I’m at.”

“I’m
happy
where I’m
at.”





Gone fishin'

Friendship and a willingness to 'get on with it' smoothed the difficult transition Carmel faced when she had to leave her home of eleven years. "I'd been living in a flat under my friend's house and when she decided to sell, I couldn't afford anything anywhere," discloses Carmel.

Carmel says she applied for public housing and waited. She recalls she spent about six months couch surfing before the opportunity to move to Brisbane Common Ground became available. That was five years ago.

Carmel shares her initial feelings about moving to a highrise environment with candour. "I was freaked out when I first came here having come from a place where we had a big backyard and lots of freedom,

where everything was open," she describes. "Three bedrooms, a separate bathroom and nobody else in the house, except my friend upstairs. It felt really strange and I think the first day I was here, while I was waiting for my interview I thought 'Oh, I don't know about this,'" she openly admits. "So yeah, I found it really tricky at first, even though the staff from Common Ground Queensland and Micah Projects were all very friendly and helpful, it didn't feel like a home and some of that was because I had very little of my stuff here. That was part of it I guess." A wry grin crosses Carmel's face. "But....," she adds jovially, "I got over it."

"It was probably over a year really before it started to feel more like home. In some ways it still doesn't

feel like home," she acknowledges. "But some of that is about the rules involved with living in a place like this, rather than just being in a place of your own. But other than that, it's fine, it's adequate, it's got everything you need. And... now that my vision has deteriorated it's really good to have a health service next door and support when I need it," explains Carmel. "I also like the way that all of the staff interact with people, really bend over backwards to make sure that people are OK. I think that's to be commended and it's one of the things I really like about the place."

Carmel believes that the social opportunities in the building played a pivotal role in helping her to adjust to her new situation. "I think primarily it was starting to meet people. At that point, Micah Projects were running a lot of activities – bingo, trivia, fishing. Every day there was something on and I met a lot of people through that and started to form some friendships. So, yeah that was what made a difference for me from that point," she affirms. "Luckily I still have them, even though the activities have dropped off because of COVID, the people are still there, so that's a good thing. I've managed to keep those connections, as well as a few links from outside."

With COVID-19 restrictions lifting gradually, Carmel says she is keen to get back to what she loves – fishing! "We're going up to Bribie on Thursday for our first 'Fish Off' since March with Fishability Qld," shares Carmel enthusiastically.

With a background in social work and housing, Carmel knows the importance of community and connection and the difference it can make to someone's quality of life, particularly when life throws you a curve ball. Her involvement with the not-for-profit organisation, Fishability Qld is more than a hobby. Carmel's role on the Committee is a continued demonstration of her willingness to lend her support and professional expertise to causes that 'make a difference' in people's lives; that offer opportunities for inclusion and meaningful engagement.

"So many people love fishing, that's one of the first things I did when I came here. I went fishing. Some people who go don't even fish, they take photos, sit on the boats and lap it up, watch the dolphins or the seagulls, or the hawks or whatever's going on out there. Just to get out and into nature. There's so few opportunities to do that," she smiles generously.

Come Fishing

Fishability QLD has witnessed, first-hand, individuals sustaining tenancies, by feeling connected to community and being involved with a group who cares for them. Our motto is "Fish and forget"; however, our day-to-day service is "doing with, not for". Fishability QLD also advocate for individuals through regular support and contact and ensures that no man or woman is left feeling like no-one is there for them or that their lives have no meaning. Healthy exercise, and getting out there, is not a common occurrence in the lives of most people experiencing vulnerability. Fishability QLD is dedicated to breaking down the barriers of social isolation and bettering people's lives through; skills and capacity building community access & support and outdoor fun. "Fish and Forget"

If you're interested in learning more about Fishability QLD and the great work they do in and for community you can find them on www.fishability.com.au

Common Ground Queensland supports the valuable services Fishability QLD offers to the community and has provided assistance to cover the cost of fishing trips during the year.





Supportive housing for families

In 2015 Common Ground Queensland (CGQ) successfully applied to the Queensland Charitable Foundation for a grant to research and document a supportive housing model relevant to families who were caught in the homelessness and child protection cycle.

CGQ and Micah Projects Limited (MPL) jointly undertook the research project in collaboration with the Department of Housing and Public Works (DPHW) and the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW). In addition, engagement with service providers in the sector and a US based expert in supportive housing for families provided essential knowledge to the project. The analysis of the costs relating to service options and potential cost savings was significantly strengthened with pro bono financial modelling advice provided by Deloitte. Findings from the research were published in the final report which was released in 2016. The report included options for single and dispersed site versions of the proposed model. A full copy of the research report can be found on our website.

In 2019 DHPW convened a Project Board and Working Group to progress development of a single site and scattered site model of supportive housing for families based on findings from the research project. The Supportive Housing for Families (SH4F) Project team includes representatives from DPHW, DCSYW, MPL and CGQ.

In June 2020 DHPW confirmed funding for a 12 month pilot of the scattered site model of SH4F. The pilot is designed to test the efficacy of the model while consideration and planning of a single site project is progressed.

Under the pilot CGQ will be responsible for headleasing 20 properties from the private rental market to sublease to families who are participants in the program. The properties will be located in or around Chermside and Woolloongabba. Families will pay rent at 25% of income with DHPW funding the gap in the rent paid to landlords. MPL will provide intentionally linked support services that focus on tenancy sustainment and delivery of a multi-generational family support program, Parents as Teachers (PAT).

The pilot project will be independently evaluated by the University of Queensland to determine the effectiveness of the model in strengthening families through reducing their engagement with child safety and ending their experience of homelessness.



SH4F project overview

A unique and innovative project breaking new ground in the delivery of Supportive Housing, through the co-design and implementation of a multidisciplinary support model and tailored housing responses.

Providing integrated housing and support for families with at least one child aged from pregnancy to 5 years of age on entry, identified at risk in both the homelessness services system and the child protection system within the Brisbane Local Government Area.

The project involves a high level of collaboration between project partners including DHPW, DCSYW, Office of Queensland Government Architect, MPL, CGQ and QUT Masters Design Studio in Architecture.

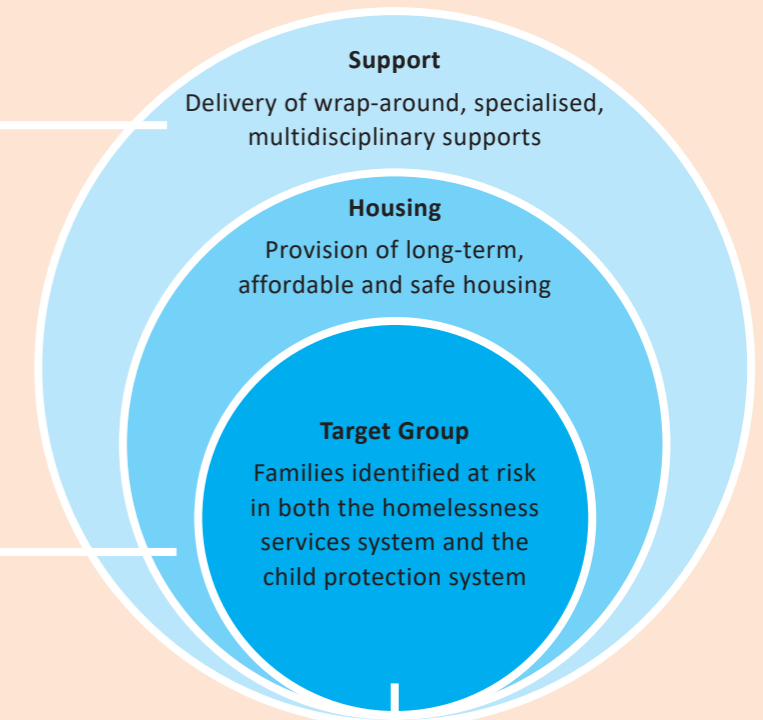
Scattered site pilot

Multidisciplinary Support Team

- Specialised early childhood and family support practitioners trained in the delivery of the Parents as Teachers (PAT) approach;
- Registered child and family health nurse; and
- Team Leader and Administration staff.

Supportive Housing and Tenancy Management

- 20 dispersed headlease properties located within a community setting, providing safe and appropriate family housing for families.
- Rent is charged at 25% of income.



Families

- With at least one child aged from pregnancy to 5 years of age (upon entry) will be prioritised with support also available to older siblings; and
- Listed on the DHPW Social Housing Register and on an extremely low income; and
- Who are accessing homelessness services and are at risk of child safety intervention due to housing instability and other risk factors such as substance misuse, mental health, disability of the parent, and domestic and family violence; or
- Who are in foster care and the barrier to family reunification is housing.



Home, safe and sound

Over the past 30 years there has been a large body of evidence gathered that demonstrates the success of supportive housing as a solution to chronic homelessness, the cost effectiveness of the approach when compared to leaving people homeless or providing a crisis response and the broader societal benefits of an approach which promotes inclusion.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of housing as a health response and shown that the Common Ground model of single site supportive housing is also perfectly positioned to support people when it is important to stay home and keep safe.

The health risks posed by the COVID-19 virus are elevated for people with underlying health conditions and this is the case for some of our tenants at Brisbane Common Ground. However, this pandemic poses a serious threat to us all and so it has been important to provide a safe home for all of our tenants. Together, CGQ and Micah Projects (MPL) have been able to leverage the inherent attributes of our building and service model to put in place plans that respond to presenting and emerging risks and provide timely information and communication with tenants about how to stay safe.

The single point of entry to the Brisbane Common Ground building and 24/7 concierge ensured we could engage with tenants regularly to provide information and reinforce hygiene and social distancing messages, assist people who may have been unwell and support tenants who were self-isolating. Importantly, we were also able to reinforce the Government recommended visitor restrictions, while maintaining access for those

providing essential support and maintaining accurate visitor records if contact tracing was required.

The MPL on-site nurse and support staff have made it possible for tenants who felt unwell to remain in their home and receive medical assessment and ongoing care in the case they had to isolate.

CGQ maintenance and concierge staff have been able to immediately disinfect and deep clean floors or touch points to protect tenants and visitors.

In addition, CGQ has been able to put in place hand sanitiser in the common areas, conduct hourly cleaning of the foyer and lifts and regular cleaning of touch points throughout the building. Our Maintenance Team has been able to respond to this increased workload due to the availability and efforts of tenants who have worked as part of this team. CGQ would like to acknowledge and thank Nilima Harjal, Sharlee Hammond, Shakena Gyemore and Michelle Williams. Without their contribution and flexibility we would not have been able to provide such a consistent and comprehensive service.

Feedback from tenants regarding the measures that have been put in place has been overwhelmingly positive. Tenants have advised that they have less anxiety and feel more protected.

We are pleased to report that to date we have had no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the building and this is testament to the vigilance of all our tenants, staff and visitors.

Getting on board

Common Ground Queensland welcomed the appointment of Dr Andrew Gardner to its Board in November, 2019.

With nearly four decades of service including 15 years of academic tenure, Dr Andrew Gardner has extensive experience in all aspects of mental health nursing and qualitative and quantitative research. He currently holds the position of Clinical Senior Lecturer in Mental Health Nursing at the University of Queensland, where he teaches in the undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

Introduced to the concept of supportive housing whilst practicing as a clinician in South Australia, Dr Gardner is a passionate advocate of the Common Ground model and firmly believes that safe and secure housing is pinnacle to the health and wellbeing of individuals and families.

“I was working with people who were experiencing homelessness and became acutely aware of just how much someone’s health and mental health can suffer if they don’t have stable accommodation and safe accommodation,” he emphasises. “I realised the work I was doing one on one with clients almost meant nothing when there was no foundation in place. Housing is an essential pillar. So I started to get really interested in how we, as a community could address this need.”

“Your own personal happiness is often derived from a sense of how you help others. It’s about giving back. But if you’re homeless and you’ve not got a lot to give, it’s really hard to derive happiness from that kind of perspective. So that’s why I think having a

secure foundation is so important. When you have that stability, you can then look at some of those other things.”

Dr Gardner explains that his exposure to the Common Ground model in Adelaide made a positive impact on him and prompted him to ‘get involved’.

“I moved to Queensland in April 2019 and once I got settled I looked for an opportunity to give back to the community,” he shares. Dr Gardner says his first point of call was Common Ground Queensland. “I noticed they had two Board vacancies and thought ‘great’. I submitted my CV and had an interview. I didn’t realise it was going to be so formal,” he laughs. “I’ve been really impressed by the leadership in the Board. The members have got great corporate governance knowledge and bring expertise from different perspectives. There’s a lot of depth.”

Dr Gardner says he’s also excited about the Board’s decision to expand the organisation’s supportive housing offering to families with the rollout of the new scattered site pilot. “It’s tremendous that the Board has actually taken a leap of faith and said we want to look at broadening our work and developing relationships with government and other NGOs to provide support for families who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. I feel really privileged to be part of it,” he shares with feeling. “The model’s good. We just need more of it.”



New horizons

A full-time nursing student, Aji knows firsthand how challenging it can be to find affordable accommodation on a low income. He is openly appreciative of the stability Brisbane Common Ground has provided him to settle and re-focus. "I was sleeping in my car for over a year or couch surfing with friends. It was difficult. There were a lot of distractions; a lot of left and right. I just couldn't concentrate coz I didn't have a good place to rest," says Aji. "Because of the ups and downs I went through I had to drop out of uni for a bit, but now I'm in my last year. I finish in November. It's a big relief," he affirms with a smile.

"Coming here, I have my own space. I have support and easy access to health care next door, a computer room to do my research and my assessment," he adds. "I really appreciate it."

Aji explains his interest in health and wellbeing stems from his involvement for many years in gymnastics, where he competed as a gymnast in Nigeria, before securing coaching positions in the Middle East and later in Australia. "I gained employment in Qatar at the sports academy and also worked in Saudi Arabia and Dubai. I spent about seven years in the Middle East," he shares. "I was approached to come to Australia and came here on a working visa. I worked at Gymnastics Victoria, Gymnastics NSW, Gymnastics Australia and then came to Gymnastics Queensland.

It was good, but it came to a time when I was doing more administrative roles. I really wanted to be on the floor of the gym, that's what I like," he shares. "I thought it would be nice to know more about health care, so I thought I would study medicine. But to study medicine takes a long time, so nursing is a good option. That's why I left my job and enrolled in nursing. I wanted a change of career. There's been a little bit of ups and downs with the journey," he reflects with a sigh. "But it's all settled."

Eager to graduate, Aji is looking forward to new horizons and hopes to secure a position in one of the local hospitals in the field of neuroscience. "I'd like to apply for the grad program at the Mater," he asserts. "See how I go. At the same time, I'll be applying for grad programs at other hospitals as well. I've done a lot of placements and have references from staff that are willing to vouch for me. So, yeah, it's all looking good." He holds up his hand. "Fingers crossed," he gestures with a warm laugh.

A leap of faith

Julia's decision to come to Australia took courage and faith. Assisted by her parents, she fled Vietnam's communist regime on a small fishing boat with her ex-husband in 1979. "There were 70 people in a nine-metre long boat," she confides. "We escaped in the night and travelled to Thailand. But too many danger," she shakes her head. Julia says surviving the refugee camp was not easy, but they had no choice. They were relieved when their application to resettle in Australia was granted. "When I first came here, we were refugee people. We arrived in Perth from the refugee camp in Bangkok. I just got one shirt and one jeans because everything was lost. We arrived 9 o'clock in the night...freezing and cold. So that's how I arrived in 1980. I think I was only 25 years old," she recalls.

Julia says they spent the first three months learning English and the culture with the assistance of Red Cross, the Australian Government and translators. "Because it's a new life," she asserts solemnly. "Everything has changed." Julia becomes thoughtful. The memories flicker across her face as she retraces that dangerous and arduous journey; leaving everything she knew behind to seek safety and refuge far from home. Her eyes then soften and she offers a smile. "But...I found Australia is amazing...amazing. I feel lucky here."

Julia and her husband spent the next two years working hard to build a new life for themselves. They started a business, bought a home and had a son. Their marriage, however, offered her no safety. Despite this, Julia says she felt compelled to stay because she wanted her son to grow up with his father. The decision to end her marriage of 20 years and start again on her own took a lot of courage. "From that day I didn't go back home," shares Julia. "I stayed with my friend and I went to work for someone else in a takeaway. I know about cooking and everything because we once had a restaurant. I did a good job," she affirms proudly. Julia's eyes light up as she talks about this period of her life and her love of cooking. Her voice also fills with pride when she talks about her son. "He finished university and went to America. He's got a good life, good job. He's a software engineer. I miss him, but... they grow up and fly."

Julia says she's contented to have made a new home at Brisbane Common Ground. "I've been here nearly five years now," she shares. "I've got my own space, my independence. I feel safe. I'm happy I can spend the rest of my life here. I want to be myself. I am strong. I can do anything now," she says with self-assurance. Julia is also happy to have found a good friend in the building that shares her language and culture. "We just met in here. She can't speak English. But we talk the same language; Vietnamese. When I first started to talk to her, she was very happy. She said 'Oh, I stayed here two years and have no friend until you came here...good, good, good,' she laughs.





The Spirit of Christmas

Fundraising plays an important role in helping us provide the benefits of supportive housing to Queensland's most vulnerable.

Since 2012, Common Ground Queensland's association with the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) has provided a fantastic opportunity to improve our fundraising efforts.

During this period, Common Ground Queensland has been invited to collect gold coin donations after a number of productions, in 2012, 2017, 2018 and also in 2019.

In total, we've fundraised more than \$32,000 through the generous donations of QPAC audiences and the hard work of our many volunteers.

The annual highlight of this fundraising effort is undoubtedly QPAC's Spirit of Christmas concert. Last year alone we had 36 people put their hand up to collect for us.

Our volunteers are decked out with tinsel and Christmas headpieces and they do an amazing job, assisting with collecting the generous donations of concert goers.

Without the support of QPAC, our volunteers and the generosity of the audiences, this fundraising just wouldn't be possible.

Thanks again to QPAC for their support of Common Ground Queensland and helping us end homelessness in our communities.



Community connections

Deloitte IMPACT Day 2019

IMPACT Day is a year-round celebration of Deloitte's commitment to community investment. Member firms around the world host IMPACT Day activities where Deloitte professionals spend the day volunteering their knowledge and expertise to assist not-for-profit organisations.

Last year, Common Ground Queensland had the fortunate opportunity to participate in the IMPACT Day hosted by Deloitte's Brisbane office. Two of our Operation Team members, Erin Smith and Raechelle Coaker joined forces with an enthusiastic working group of Deloitte IT, communication and visual design experts to develop an online eligibility questionnaire and referral process for our supportive housing and affordable housing programs. "We approached the issue from a discovery learning perspective," says Erin. "We worked through a process of enquiry and unpacked all the different questions we ask in the application process in relation to the two different programs."

"We had a lot of fun but most importantly we came away with an online platform that we can now plug into our website to help people determine their eligibility and provide them with useful information about their housing options," says Raechelle. "We also really wanted to focus on providing people with alternative options they could look into even if they weren't eligible for our programs," adds Erin.

"We're now working on refining the process in-house before we roll it out," shares Raechelle. "We're looking at going 'live' later this year."

Erin and Raechelle say they've got other ideas they'd like to problem solve when another opportunity to participate comes along. "We're thinking about how we can refine our website to improve usability," offers Erin. "The Deloitte team has got great skills and the process was really interesting."

Christmas Dinner

Christmas get-togethers at Brisbane Common Ground are always popular. This year we were treated to another delicious Christmas dinner, followed by a sumptuous and very decadent dessert.

A big thank you to Phyllis and Erin for their seamless coordination and catering and for adding all the finishing touches that make our Christmases feel extra special.

"Maybe Christmas he thought, doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!" – Dr Seuss.



Brisbane Open House

We look forward to opening our doors each year for the Brisbane Open House – Unlock your City Program. With close to 60 guests, our sixth year of participation was a huge success and another great opportunity to invite the community to learn more about Brisbane Common Ground and the benefits of supportive housing. We would like to extend a big thank you to all the staff and tenants who volunteered their precious weekend to help out on the day! Unfortunately, the impacts of COVID-19 will preclude our involvement in 2020, however city buffs will still be able to enjoy the 2020 Open House Digital Program on offer.



Griffith University Interns

Elena Morgenthaler

As part of my psychology and criminology degree I had the opportunity to gain experience at Common Ground Queensland. I was excited to be able to use research skills I had gained at university to contribute to an ongoing project.

During my time I analysed the data that had been collected over a number of years and developed a report with the findings. The report centred around vacated tenants and reasons for leaving with the aims of understanding trends and informing possible changes within the organisation.

Unfortunately, due to the disruption caused by COVID-19, I was unable to continue my internship on-site for the whole time. Although I did not spend a lot of time on-site I'm grateful to have had a few days to tour the facilities and meet everyone on the team. With some adjustments, I was lucky to be able to continue to work from home and finish the report.

I'm extremely appreciative for my experience as an intern at Common Ground Queensland and will continue to use everything I learned throughout my career.

Elena Morgenthaler

Bachelor of Psychological Science/Bachelor of Criminology and Criminal Justice - Griffith University Enrolled 4th Year

Nicole Perry

Over the course of three months I had the pleasure of working alongside an amazing group of people. During this time, I was given the opportunity to gain experience and utilise my skills in data analytics and psychological research. Some of the key projects I worked on included data entry and analysis of trends, providing feedback on survey structure and staff assessment notes, implementation of a new filing and data storage system to allow for long-term use and comparative analyses and psychological research for data interpretation.

I gained more confidence in myself and my work throughout my time here and was given a lot of feedback as I went along. I really enjoyed working with a team full of passionate individuals who shared the same values as I. I had the opportunity to get to know and share stories with everyone in the office and overall had a really fun time! I was also lucky to be around during everyone's birthdays - thanks for all the cake!

Nicole Perry

Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) - Griffith University Completed 3rd Year

CGQ Team



Sonya, CEO



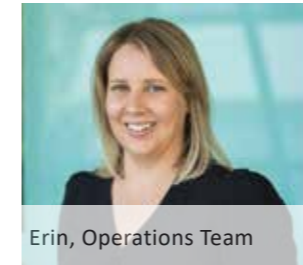
Andrew, Concierge Team



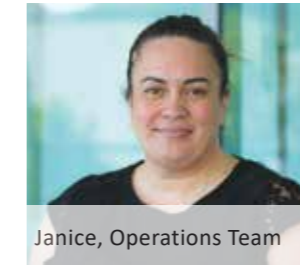
Anthony, Maintenance Team



Derek, Operations Team



Erin, Operations Team



Janice, Operations Team



Joseph, Concierge Team



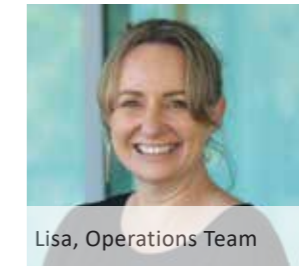
Kath, Maintenance Team



Kelvin, Maintenance Team



Kurtis, Maintenance Team



Lisa, Operations Team



Mario, Concierge Team



Mark, Concierge Team



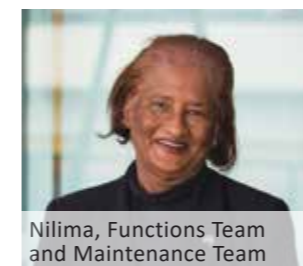
Michael, Operations Team



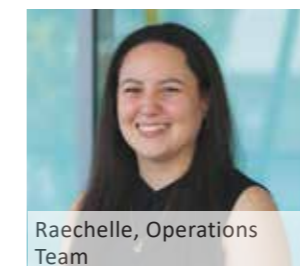
Mikayla, Maintenance Team



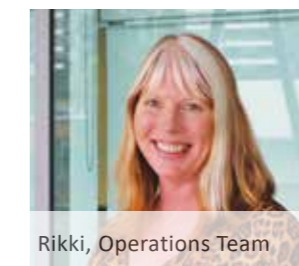
Neve, Operations Team



Nilima, Functions Team and Maintenance Team



Raechelle, Operations Team



Rikki, Operations Team



Shakena, Maintenance Team



Sharlee, Maintenance Team



Wesley, Concierge Team



Justin Hogg, Company Secretary

Board of Directors



PETER PEARCE – CHAIR

Peter has over 30 years' experience in not-for-profit governance with organisations working in aero-medical retrieval, employment, homelessness, housing, child and family support, acute health care and child care. He has worked in senior roles in aged care, health, politics, public service, business development and general management.

Peter is a fellow of the Governance Institute of Australia and the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has completed the advanced company director's initial and advanced programs. He holds Masters degrees in Ethics and Legal Studies and Public Sector Management and other qualifications in social science and business.



MARK FENTON - DEPUTY CHAIR

Mark joined the Board in 2015 and is the chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. He has more than 18 years' experience as a company director and has served on the Boards of Queensland Ballet Company and John Paul College Limited.

He is the Chairman of Queensland Alliance for Mental Health Ltd and is a Director of Community Mental Health Australia Inc. He chaired the Arts Investment Advisory Board that provided strategic and funding advice to the Queensland government.

Mark is a finance executive with over 25 years' experience, is a fellow of both the Australian Institute of Company Directors and CPA Australia. He has worked for businesses in the disability services, professional services, manufacturing, retirement living, retail and membership services sectors.



MARK LIGHTFOOT – DIRECTOR

Mark is a Partner in the Banking and Financial Services Group of HWL Ebsworth. His clients include major Australian banks and financial institutions.

Mark's experience includes documenting and advising on the structuring of a range of debt finance transactions including property development and investment finance, construction and project financing and equipment finance. He also has significant experience in securities enforcement and work-outs and advising financial institutions regarding pre-enforcement strategies.

Mark regularly undertakes significant pre-lending reviews and security due diligence on behalf of his financier clients. In addition to acting for financial institutions, Mark also regularly acts for several corporate clients with respect to their project finance requirements.



JOANNA SPANJAARD - DIRECTOR

Joanna is a Partner in the Risk Advisory Practice at Deloitte. She has over 20 years' experience in risk management developing, implementing and providing assurance over all aspects of risk management including risk frameworks, risk appetite, risk maturity diagnostics, risk governance, culture and operating models. Joanna also has deep experience in many industry sectors including not-for-profits, health, public safety, energy, mining and water and regularly facilitates emerging, strategic and operational risk workshops with Boards and senior executives. She is a mechanical engineer and is also a Board Member of the Industry Advisory Board, Electrical Engineering, University of Queensland.



MICHAEL RYALL - DIRECTOR

Michael is a Chartered Accountant with over 20 years' experience in hospitality and property organisations in Australia, UK and the Middle East. Over this time, he has developed an expertise in financial management and reporting, governance, business management, strategic planning and project management. His financial and commercial experience provides a detailed understanding of the property industry, real estate practices and financial reporting within the industry.

Michael is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a member of the Financial Executive. He holds qualifications in Strata Management and Hotel Management, has a Master of Professional Accounting and post graduate qualifications in Applied Finance.



CHRISTINE GROSE - DIRECTOR

Christine Grose has over three decades of direct service delivery and management experience in the community sector - in particular in the areas of homelessness and youth at risk.

Christine has served on numerous community Management Committees throughout her career. Her focus for her voluntary and paid work is on implementing structural change and supporting community capacity-building, in the service of social justice. Christine currently works as Community Engagement Lead for the Logan Together backbone team, part of a collective impact movement to improve the well-being of children aged 0 to 8 in the City of Logan.



CANDICE SGROI – DIRECTOR

Candice joined the Board in May 2019 and is a member of the Supporter Engagement and Advocacy Committee. She has more than 20 years' experience as a journalist and corporate communications and investor relations professional obtained in Australia, the United Kingdom and Middle East.

Candice holds a Bachelor of Arts (Journalism) from the University of Queensland, a Graduate Diploma in Applied Corporate Governance from the Governance Institute of Australia and is currently an Executive MBA Candidate at QUT. She has experience as a member of an Executive Committee on an ASX listed company, a member of an industry committee and as the chair of a Community Partnership Fund.



ANDREW GARDNER – DIRECTOR

Dr Andrew Gardner is a Senior Lecturer in Mental Health Nursing at the University of Queensland, where he teaches mental health nursing in the undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Andrew has worked in a number of senior clinical roles in many mental health services in Australia and as a Chief Executive Officer for a number of country hospitals in South Australia. His recent mental health clinical work focused on the needs of the homeless community in Adelaide and regional centres in South Australia.

Andrew holds a Bachelor of Nursing, a Master of Mental Health Nursing, a Master of Business Administrative Management, a Diploma of Medical Hypnosis, and a Philosophical Doctorate for his thesis titled "A constructivist grounded theory of mental health clinicians' boundary maintenance".

Thank you

Common Ground Queensland would like to thank and recognise the following individuals and organisations who have invested in our initiatives and outcomes throughout the year.

PARTNERS AND AFFILIATES

3rd Space
Australasian Housing Institute
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre
Business South Bank
Clemente
Community Housing Providers Queensland (CHPs for QLD)
Department of Housing and Public Works
Griffith University
Micah Projects Limited (MPL)
Q Shelter
QCOSS
QPAC
Queensland Police Service
Songlines Community Choir
UpBeat Arts

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Deloitte
Department of Housing and Public Works
HWL Ebsworth Lawyers
Kaye Cooper
Lisa Morey
Lucas Surtie
Milan Latten
Tim Douge
Tony Beresford-Smith, Practical Business Support
Tym Guitars

INVESTMENT THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

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Brendon Donohue
Cara Brackstone
Cathy Stephens
Cheryl Desmarais
Christine Grose
Clinton Farlow
Deb Hankins
Derek Taylor
Elena Morgenthaler
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Emily Holden
Erin Smith
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Greg Dorge
Harrigan Ryan
Harry Pearce
James Taylor
Karen Taylor
Kate Owen
Kellie Williams
Leala McMillan
Liam Taylor
Lisa Armitage
Malcom Upton
Michael Kelly
Michelle Williams
Milaan Latten
Nayereh Sanikhani
Niamh Taylor
Nicole Perry
Nilima Harjal
Peter Ayscough
Rachelle Coaker
Rikki Pieters
Riley Dorge
Ryan Taylor
Sharon Laycock
Tom Vergotis

Supporter program

When you support Common Ground Queensland, you add your voice to our call to end homelessness.

Visit commongroundqld.org.au/supporters and become an official supporter of Common Ground Queensland.

We will keep you up to date with the work we are doing to end homelessness and invite you to contribute, participate and share in that journey.



**common
ground**

QUEENSLAND
ending homelessness

**ANNUAL REPORT
2019 - 2020**

Home, Safe and Sound



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