

Changing Lives, Changing Communities Normanton



17 & 18 JULY 2019

Normanton Shire Hall

NORMANTON

About Changing Lives, Changing Communities



Changing Lives, Changing Communities are 14, two-day events across Queensland, creating new ways for people – citizens, community organisations, private sector and government representatives – to come together, envision and ask “what will it take to create communities where everyone contributes, matters and belongs?”

Changing Lives, Changing Communities is about bringing together all parts of the community to co-create solutions to ensure everyone is included in their community, and can access what they need; like a place to call home, good health, transport, education, and meaningful employment.

This document brings together the highlights of the two days in 2019 in Normanton. This document is a record of a community conversation held as part of Changing Lives, Changing Communities. The views expressed in this document are a reflection of the conversation and are not necessarily the views of the host organisations.

The Changing Lives Changing Communities events in Toowoomba, Mackay, Caboolture, Brisbane, Gold Coast, and Normanton are funded through Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) National Readiness Grants - National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) – a partnership between Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN), Queensland Council of Social Service (QCROSS) and Queensland Human Rights Commission.

Check-in: What inspired you to be here?



To learn more about this community.
To connect and network so that we can learn how to contribute to this community.

I like to help people and mix with others because I live with disability.

Share a story/stories about the work and involvement Stingers have had with recovery clients.

I want to be able to help kids and take them out on excursions.

Try to be a positive influence on the community; give them a purpose.

To speak for my community. To speak about myself. To speak about my disability. To speak to enjoy myself.

To learn more about the Normanton community and its needs. Learn where I can be of service.

I didn't know that it was on, but came with my aunt and uncle.

Be a part of growing the "Voice" for the community. To be heard.



Welcome to country

Auntie Marlena Logan

Auntie Marlena welcomed us to Kukatj, Kurtijar and Gkuthaarn country. During her welcome, she spoke about listening to and respecting cultural ways, encouraging people to achieve higher, speaking out the voice in your mind, the right people have come, young people pride, and hope.

Stories of inclusion



Story tellers

Tonia Smerdon and Amanda Warradoo



Tonia Smerdon (pictured right) is the Principal of Normanton State School. She has lived in Normanton for the past 20 years and has been an educator for 30 years. She understands what it is like to be part of a small community, having grown up in a town that was “half the size” of Normanton. She says Normanton is a very welcoming community.

Growing up, Tonia’s parents encouraged herself and her three siblings to embrace their differences. They did – Tonia’s older sister is a nurse, her brother is a Workplace Health and Safety Officer, and her younger sister is interested in horse riding and dance.

This mantra of “embracing difference” has continued into Tonia’s career.

“We have done lots of work over the last few years with staff, parents and students to ensure that we include each and every student, each and every family member and lots of community members in our school,” Tonia says.

Normanton State School is also currently putting the finishing touches on a yarning circle to ensure everyone is included.

“We have a high Indigenous population in our school. We consider ourselves very lucky that we have a number of family groups and local Indigenous groups that come in and out of our school,” Tonia explains.

Tonia says the yarning circle will be an important tool when the local language lessons start in the next few weeks.

The school also has a team of people employed – including the school Chaplain, teacher aides and the student support committee – to ensure all students, including children with disabilities, are supported.

“They are there to support the students socially, emotionally, as well as academically,” Tonia says.

“They case manage the students to make sure all students have someone they can talk to regularly and work with them regularly,” Tonia says.

Stories of inclusion



Story tellers

Tonia Smerdon and Amanda Warradoo

"We are very fortunate that we have school facilities that enable us to invite students from all walks of life," she says.

This includes students with a range of disabilities, including students with fluctuating hearing or hearing impairments at the school.

"We have sound amplification systems in every classroom for our teachers to wear...to make sure the students are able to hear."

They also have a range of tools to help all students get the most out of their schooling.

"If we get kids in that are not feeling calm or need some security, we have a number of weighted animals that we put on them, so they have something to hug and something to feel secure with."

They also have fiddle toys for children who find it hard to sit still and need something to keep their hands busy. The school also has customised furniture for some of their students, including Malia.

Malia is in Year 1 and is in a wheelchair, so a modified desk and chair has been created for her.

"She also has a teacher aide who works in our classroom with our students and is a really important part of our year 1-2 class," Tonia says.

Malia's mum, Amanda Warradoo, also spoke at the event. Amanda also has two sons that have hearing impairments. One of her sons also attends Normanton State School, while her other son attends a local Christian college.

Amanda has worked hard with the school team to ensure her son and daughter are included in all activities, and that they are an important part of the school and student body.

Amanda says she is grateful her children are well looked after at school.

"The staff make sure they are included," Amanda says.

At the start of 2019, the school was also fortunate to get a purpose-built room to support Malia and other students with disability.

"It has changeroom, a toilet and an electric hoist to assist students when needed," Tonia says.

Some teachers and teacher aides have also been trained in how to use the facilities to ensure children with disabilities can stay in school all day.

Tonia's parents would be proud of how their mantra of "embracing difference" has helped Tonia, Amanda and the Normanton community co-create such a diverse and inclusive school.

Stories of inclusion



Story tellers

Kevin Clarke

Kevin Clarke is deaf. His first language is AUSLAN with citation needed. Kevin could share his story at the Changing Lives, Changing Communities event by via a remote interpreter on his computer.

“Most of the time people communicate [with me] on paper. They write it down,” he says.

Kevin also uses Skype to talk to his friends.

“At home, I get on the computer and talk to anyone,” he says.

Kevin, who is a man of few words as his friend jokes, says “it’s good” having support workers that he can interpret with.

His friend says Kevin will soon have a tablet that he can type into and it will talk for him.

Because of technological advancements, Kevin was able to fully participate in the two days. A Bluetooth speaker/mic was being passed around over the two days, and the interpreter was able to translate in both directions. This enabled Kevin to ‘hear’ the conversations but also contribute if he chose to.

Kevin was happy that he could fully participate and be involved in the event.



Stories of inclusion



Story tellers

Chris Ruyg



Chris arrived in Normanton five years ago. He came from a small community on the New South Wales south coast where he had a milk run. However, Chris felt he had “no skills” so was starting from scratch when he arrived.

One day, he saw a job on the window around health promotion.

“Everything they wanted in the job was stuff I had done in my life personally for free through the community,” Chris explains.

He got the job and is now the Community Wellbeing Coordinator at the Recovery Centre at Gidgee Healing – a residential drug and alcohol recovery service specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

One of the services the centre offers is the Men’s Group. Chris leapt at the chance to join the group.

“It was a good way to learn about the community and get to know the community. It’s good to see a lot of the guys who have been to the men’s group over the years are here today,” he says.

Over the years, the group have been on fishing trips and cultural activities.

“I got to learn about the culture. It helped to be included,” Chris says.

Chris says the Men’s Group philosophy is simple.

“We wanted good information out there and activities people wanted to do, which is good for the brain, the mind. Things that everyone can do so everyone was able to participate. In that respect, I think that’s been great and it’s been good to see big turnouts and people of all abilities there.”

Chris says unfortunately they can no longer run the group but they are actively looking to the community to continue it.

“We want to look at ways to get the Men’s Group back to community and continue it. We are looking for input from other organisations who want to be involved in that.”

Chris says being part of the Men’s Group has been important to him.

“I know what it feels like to be included. I think people don’t get that chance. If you don’t get involved in something, it is hard to fit in.”

Another part of Chris’ job is to work in partnership with the local community.

In 2017, five people from the Recovery Centre showed an interest in playing for the Normanton Stingers, the local rugby league team. Chris’s work team and coach of the Stingers Camden Pascoe worked together to make these men’s hopes a reality.

Chris says it wouldn’t have been possible for the men to play without the collaboration.

Stories of inclusion



Story tellers

Chris Ruyg

"The blokes play on the weekend, but we only have one or two staff on the weekend. We don't have capacity for someone to go off to the football with these guys," Chris explains.

"But they [the Stingers] would go out of their way to pick up the fellas and keep them safe.

"These guys have alcohol addictions and stuff like that – they made sure they got to play, that they got that chance. But also, they kept them protected and safe."

Chris also wanted to be involved in the community outside of work. His children started swimming, so he got involved in the local swimming club.

"I have never swum in my life. I've done a bit of free surfing but never actual swimming," he explains.

However, Chris wanted to help.

"Next thing [I know], I'm President of the swimming club," he laughs.

The club grew in numbers under Chris' guidance but quickly came up against barriers, particularly because of their remote location.

"We started to realise that we have swimmers, but they don't really have anyone to compete against. The nearest swimming carnival was 400 kilometres away."

They started to investigate ways they could keep the interest up.

"We started engage with a couple of other clubs and talked about getting our swimmer there," Chris explains.

The club did a lot of fundraising so the children could travel to the swimming carnivals.

"That was the first step – getting every kid to a swimming carnival in Cloncurry or Richmond," Chris says.

But the club didn't want to have to travel all the time, so they started talking to the other clubs about sending their swimmers to a swimming carnival in Normanton.

"Slowly we are getting carnivals here and kids coming here," he explains.

Chris says having the swimming carnival in Normanton is important for the children to feel included.

"It has become an inclusion event – kids can be included, they can compete. It is good for their mental health. Being involved, making friendships and being active are important for a successful life."

Chris also highlights the community effort that comes with putting on these events.

"Community members, donations, people volunteering to coach. It just doesn't come from one person.

"My lessons have been small communities are good. What you put into a community, you get back."

Stories of inclusion



Story tellers

Camden Pascoe



Camden is a proud Kurtijar man from Normanton. He is also mad about rugby league, particularly about his local rugby club the Normanton Stingers.

Over the past three years, Camden and the Stingers have been working with people from the Recovery Centre at Gidgee Healing – a residential drug and alcohol recovery service specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 2017, five people from the centre were interested in playing for the Normanton Stingers.

“We trained from 6–7pm, three days a week,” Camden explains.

“It was good for those young gentlemen. They are all from out of town, so they didn’t have many friends, apart from at the centre. It was good for them to get out, exercise and clear their head.”

Camden says it helped having connections to get the new players on board.

“I was the coach but I worked with Chris (Chris Ruyg – see below). I did some gym work with them beforehand so when they showed an interest in coming to football, it was a pretty easy transition.”

Camden says the club is supportive of their newest recruits.

“We played home and away games. The President was very supportive of this. He would often drive his own car to the away games and the boys would all get in there.”

For the away games, the other players would travel separately.

“Being a football team, we would buy beer,” Camden explains.

“But we wanted to support the guys who were changing their lifestyles and changing the choices they were making for better alternatives. We wanted to give them the benefits of being a football club without any of that nonsense.”

This trial has been successful. So successful, in fact, that in 2018 the Normanton Stingers started their own competition.

“They don’t all play for the Normanton Stingers. Some play for Burketown Roosters or Mornington,” Camden laughs.

“But it’s very good to have them still involved.

“It’s all in fun. It’s all for the love of the game. We are just happy to be involved with some of these young fellas. And now we have got a women’s team too. It’s not paid – it’s all just for the love of the game.”

Recipe for inclusion



While storytellers were sharing their experiences, we asked participants to listen to the ingredients for inclusion. This is what they heard.



Recipe:

1. Men's Group restarting
2. Ladies activites
3. Community activities
4. Inclusion
5. Respect
6. Build confidence
7. Transport
8. Listening to contributions
9. Opportunities
10. Innovation

World Cafe



What will it take to create a community where everyone contributes, matters and belongs?

Information
Education
Implementation
Understanding
Sharing
Services
Transport
Positivity
Support
Women's
Men's
Groups
Engaging
Planning
Community
Yarning

World Cafe



What are the elements
already happening
here?

Accessibility
Inclusivity Markets
Participation
Love Rodeo
Games Elders
Football
Mens
Womens
Groups Schools
Advocacy
Languages

World Cafe



What action am I willing to take to progress the vision?

Advocating
Involvement
Providing
Provisioning
Positivity
Speak
Volunteering
Projects
Together
Accessibility
Transport
Cooperation

Appreciative inquiry



Making social change requires courage. We asked participants to share when they had to be courageous to create change. We asked what was inspiring/important and what helped it to happen? This is what was heard!

What was inspiring/important?

- Joined together with other employees
- Ownership
- Parental inspiration
- That big changes are possible in your life
- Having the family understand
- Engage in the community
- Finding strength
- Trust in yourself
- Keep moving forward

What was inspiring/important?

- Learning to value self
- Was courageous in speaking up and encouraging change to break those bad patterns
- Care and thought
- Care for others while practicing self care
- Changing living environment for work
- Common ground
- Strong and independent
- Convincing people to accept support
- Joined together
- Needing everyone to come together to make change

What helped it to happen?

- Having support
- Someone who believes you can make change
- A change in yourself
- New beginnings
- Taking steps, reflection
- Passion
- Talking openly
- Identify behaviours
- Relying on skills and trusting
- Connection, culture and family
- Knowledge and understanding

What helped it to happen?

- Family issues brought us all together
- To be a support in the community
- Trust within one another
- Coming together
- Action list (who needed to do what and when)
- How to deal with it
- Learning about available services
- Management was open to change
- Timing/patience
- Sought further training

How did you land today?



- A positive future for Normanton is possible
- Just make things happen
- The importance of community involvement and happenings about to happen and when

Working together, Normanton has so many strengths to come up with a lot of selections. Community of Normanton is so resourceful.

- Everyone has the power to help make our community inclusive
- People work together in Normanton

- People with disability are included have have a voice in Normanton
- Amazing people who are open and willing to change
- How many ideas people have
- How many people want to see positive change

- Importance of hope and open mindedness in community
- Peoples ideas are being heard
- Change is intrinsic, in that change comes from within and not from outside

- Learning about mental health, disability and ideas – connections, the community, what and who is here to help, working together
- Community is keen, you just have to ask and include them

- Getting up and talking about what I wanted to talk about
- Anything is possible if everyone is willing to cooperate and communicate

Open Space

Ideas to actions....



Project 1



Host
idea

Access in the community

What
could this
idea
become...

Vision

✓ What
do we
know
works...

- Identify a project lead, eg. School principal?
- Liaise with Cherie Schaffer at council
- Community member to begin petition if needed

Who do we need
to partner with...

- Council
- Queensland Transport
- Advocate disabilities
- Westpac
- Normanton stop shop
- Food works
- Job experience

- Accessible footpaths and gutters
- Metal ramps added to gutters
- Accessible pedestrian crossing (audio)
- Ramp at the Bank and accessible doorway

What are
the risks
and challenges..

- Heritage listed footpaths
- Funding
- Pedestrian crossing
- Shops are hard to access
- Shop aisles are too small
- Seating at the bridge



Project 1

What do we need to learn by doing?...

- What's needed to get ramps and footpaths installed? (Heritage listing)
- What does the Discrimination Act say about access to community?
- What's Q Transports responsibility around providing safe roads? Eg. Pedestrian crossing
- What's council responsibility around accessible footpaths and gutters, including safety risks?
- Who's responsible to fund it?

How do we make sure everyone is included?...

- Rally to encourage community members to attend monthly council town meeting and spruكة
- Access to community: educate the council
- Start a petition and get community members to sign (promote an accessible environment)
- Support and encourage each other to keep talking about it – 'support in numbers'

What are our next wise steps...

- Start petition
- Identify a project lead
- Date for next Council meeting – present petition

Open Space

Ideas to actions....



Project 2

Is there an activity in Normanton where adults + children with disability can come together to pass on and share ideas, and connections, so they can learn from each other?



Host idea

✓ What do we know works...

- Communicating
- Information sharing
- Food
- Transport to and from
- People getting together
- Involving key people
- Having ownership of the group so that it gains momentum

Who do we need to partner with...

- Normanton Council
- School Normanton
- Local elders
- People with disabilities and their carers
- Church/local groups

What could this idea become...

- Weekly/fortnightly group
- Social gathering
- A safe place to discuss issues and find solutions
- A way to include everyone in the community



Vision

What are the risks and challenges..

- No one will show up or commit
- Finding a suitable venue at no cost
- Find and engage the right people
- Getting sponsorship for food and activities



Project 2

What do we need to learn by doing?...

- How the Normanton community accepts new ideas
- What types of activities will be beneficial

How do we make sure everyone is included?...

- Advertising
- Including in council newsletters, local newsletters, schools
- Inviting appropriately

What are our next wise steps...

- Gauge interest, asking local people and finding key people to drive it
- Approach key people
- Consider activities which would help people engage
- Find sponsorship

Open Space

Ideas to actions....



Project 3



Host
idea

Access day for NDIS



Vision

What
could this
idea
become...

✓ What
do we
know
works...

- It has worked well in other communities
- Plan
- Accurate communication

- Successful day with outcomes progress made
- Connections with organisations and community members

Who do we need
to partner with...

- Schools
- Specialist Disability Services Assessment and Outreach Team (SDSAOT)
- National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
- North and West Remote Health (NWRH)
- Venue
- Gidgee
- Community members
- Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN)
- Participants

What are
the risks
and challenges..

- Coordinating it
- Making it happen



Project 3

What do we need to learn by doing?...

- Appropriate communication

How do we make sure everyone is included?...

- Advertise
- Flyers
- Communicate with community groups
- Accessible venue

What are our next wise steps...

- Feed the information to management for approval
- Continue to discuss/organise with relevant teams

Open Space

Ideas to actions.....



Project 4



Host
idea

Men's business

Vision

What
could this
idea
become...

✓ What
do we
know
works...

- Bringing people together to take them out bush
- Cooking damper, fish and other things
- People being able to share information and trust each other

Men, younger adults, boys of all abilities coming together to share knowledge and support men's business and well-being.

Who do we need
to partner with...

- North West Remote Health
- Gidgee healing
- Cootharingi
- Bynoe
- Normanton State School
- Centacare
- Local council
- Elders group

What are
the risks
and challenges..

- Bringing boys into the group
- Transport to help the group get out and about
- Getting some other people to help coordinate the group



Project 4

How do we make sure everyone is included?...

- Getting family involved in supporting the group
- Ask organisations to a meeting about the group
- Talk with the principle at the school

What are our next wise steps...

- Make a meeting with Chris and Peter to discuss this vision of the group, along with Anne from the group
- Hold meeting with interested people and organisations around getting the new group together

Open Space

Ideas to actions....



Project 5



Host
idea

More employment

What
could this
idea
become...

Vision

✓ What
do we
know
works...

- Word of mouth
- Flyers in shops
- Talk up the benefits of having a job

- A better town with more employment
- People have a sense of purpose and direction

What are
the risks
and
challenges..

- Getting people willing to take up employment – negative attitudes
- Not all willing to be workers, or don't have a car – which is needed
- Lazy to work!

Who do we
need to partner
with...

- Cootharinga admin
- Help them understand the needs of Normanton people



Project 5

How do we make sure everyone is included?...

- Get customers to help with design, advertising, then distribution of flyer

What are our next wise steps...

- Talk to Alison about some sort of funding for transport for support workers. Also get her permission to organise advertising.

Mayor Jack Bowden



Mayor Jack Bawden joined the event at the end of day two to listen to the project ideas. He advised on a number of contributions that Carpentaria Shire Council could make to the projects including:

- Plans to undertake an audit of footpaths and other public access and safety issues
- Employment of a grant's writer by Council, who would be available to the community to assist them with grant writing
- Use of the sports complex for events and meetings.

The Mayor joined us for lunch and check out.





Two days, two pages

Changing Lives
Changing Communities
Normanton, July 17 2019
QCOSS - QDN

What would it take to create
EVERYONE contributes, matters.



- Recipe for Inclusion**
- Keep it simple
 - choice • transport
 - opportunity
 - welcoming
 - care + thought
 - respect
 - willingness - want to
 - commitment
 - do things differently
 - partnership • accessible space



listen to + respect cultural ways • encourage people to achieve higher • space

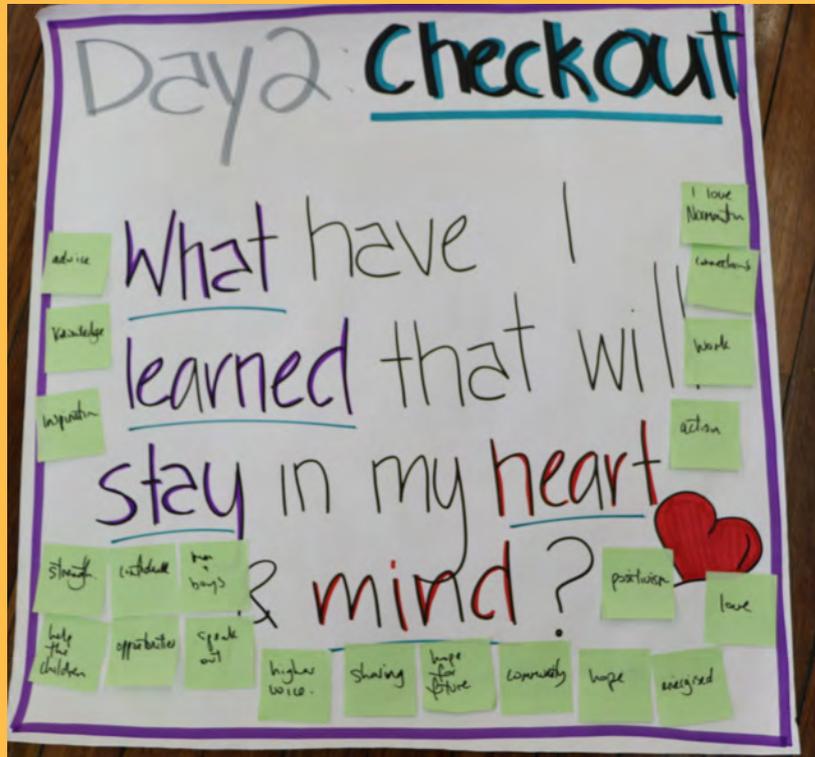
Day 1.



Two days, two pages



Thanks to everyone who came along to Changing Lives, Changing Communities Normanton.
We know you have made a difference!



Changing Lives, Changing Communities Normanton is a partnership between:

