



# SUMMARY REPORT

## Queensland Policy Leaders Series

### The Business of Community Services

**Thursday 14 November**

7.30am – 9.00am

Customs House, 399 Queen St, Brisbane

**Moderator: Dr Nicole Hartley**, MBA Director, UQ Business School

#### **Panellists**

**Adrian Carson**, Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Urban Indigenous Health

**Karen Dare**, Chief Executive Officer, Communitify

**Mark Henley**, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Council of Social Service

**Joanne Jessop**, Chair of Queensland Division, National Disability Services and Chief Executive Officer, Multicap

**Garry Page**, Director, Queensland, Australian Red Cross

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## Breakfast Summary

The key theme from the 2019 Queensland Futures Institute *The Business of Community Services* breakfast focused on the social perspective of the community services industry, including current initiatives in Queensland addressing social issues such as homelessness, financial hardship, addiction, mental illness and disability. community controlled service providers, community and volunteer organisations, amongst other social services, play a critical role creating value for the Queensland economy and supporting society's vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Additionally, the need for collaboration within the sector with skilled volunteers and for-profit organisations in order to continue providing valuable work was highlighted. As culture changes throughout society, governance and improved accountability by corporates and government will more firmly shape community services to focus on the outcomes, rather than the cost of these services.

### Key comments from Panellists

#### Moderator: Dr Nicole Hartley, MBA Director, UQ Business School

- Introduced the panellists and contextualised the discussion to the necessity of community services as support systems for those most vulnerable.

#### Adrian Carson, Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Urban Indigenous Health

- Institute for Urban Indigenous Health is a community control service provider aiming to close the gap for the Indigenous population. Starting with 5 clinics in 2009 and now with 20, the organisation works to address the complexities around 'closing the gap' in a solution and outcome-focused way.
- A narrative shift must be driven in the culture around community service providers, their role in the economy and how they are funded. This would change the focus of investment to encourage improved outcomes, rather than ineffective allocation of resources.
- Community services must leverage opportunities to attract talent through many avenues including student placements; experience in the sector is invaluable not only for the sector but also the students. Those with placements in community services, particularly in regional and Indigenous health services, receive experience which greatly improves their skills and knowledge.

#### Karen Dare, Chief Executive Officer, Communitify

- Communitify is a play space/community hub organisation supporting larger communities through difficult times and leveraging a multi-service response. The complex and multi-layered approach to addressing those experiencing social issues such as homelessness, financial hardship, addiction, mental illness and disability relies on long-term strategy and strong partnerships to deliver the services those at risk require.
- Access to capital is the most important contribution that private sector and government can offer to organisations in this sector, in addition to the social networks and skills that can be leveraged to enhance outcomes.

#### Mark Henley, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Council of Social Service

- Society's need for community services has increased drastically; 60-70% of households have experienced financial hardship in the last 12 months, despite 70% of households having two or more incomes. This is because living affordability is decreasing, as the cost of living rises and wage growth remains flat.
- Social issues including mental health problems, suicide and homelessness are among the most serious we need to address. There must be a narrative shift around how we treat this population; while the Federal narrative may paint welfare recipients unfairly, over 50% of Newstart recipients are 45 years or older and 30% have a disability or illness. Demographic analysis suggests this includes mothers in regional areas, adversely impacting on the upbringing of their children. Employers are less likely to employ older Australians, people from cultures other than their own, and Indigenous or disabled people, highlighting these demographics as most vulnerable.
- The current focus of society and government must shift from to concentrating on those with the greatest need. Working with Councils and government on social plans also helps to foster better economic outcomes.



**Joanne Jessop, Chair of Queensland Division, National Disability Services and Chief Executive Officer, Multicap**

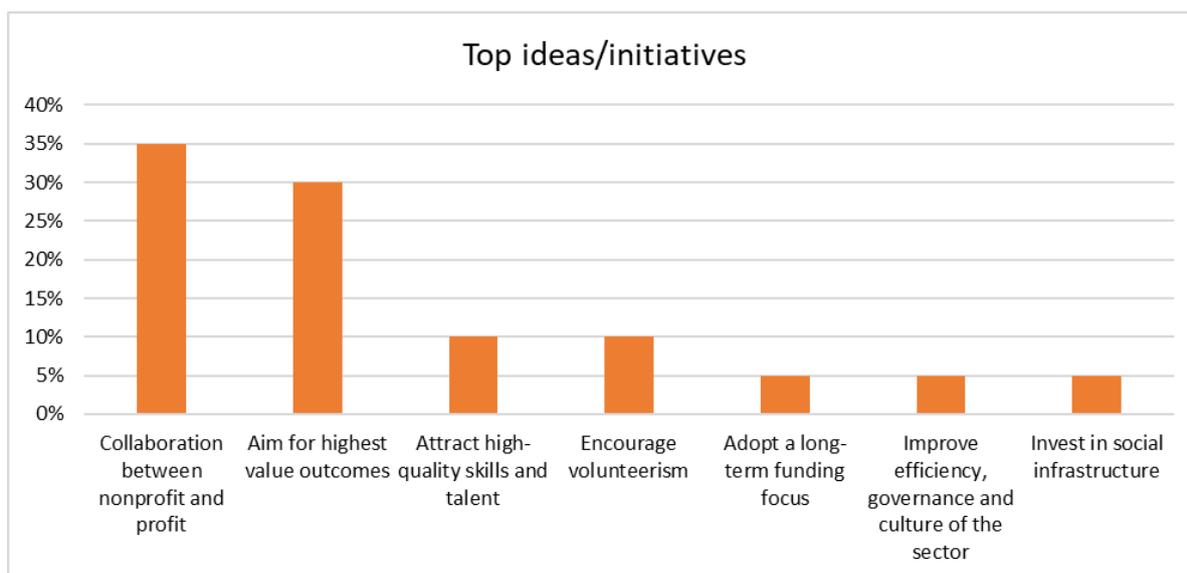
- Community services are the largest growing sector of the Queensland economy, creating jobs and providing real economic value. It is not a secondary sector, but rather a large driver of skills and employment for the state.
- Good social policy effectively closes the gap, but is highly complex, and therefore must be carefully administered. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is Australia's largest social reform and exemplifies this complexity and size. Enhanced collaboration between State and Federal Government has seen public funding increased from \$2bn to \$4bn; these funds must be efficiently leveraged by the sector in order to continue delivering value to stakeholders and the community. There are currently 50,000 people in Queensland who are supported by this scheme, but an additional 40,000 should currently be receiving help.
- Quality assurance and safeguarding are invaluable for this sector; culture must encourage accountability to ensure the best outcomes for those at-risk. This has been seen in the Aged Care Commission and the upcoming Disability Support Commission.
- A long-term funding strategy is required to ensure adequate provisions are made for critical community services such as housing and disability support.
- Public funding schemes, such as the NDIS, must not be reduced to line items of community services which are covered, and should take a holistic, outcome-focused approach.

**Garry Page, Director, Queensland, Australian Red Cross**

- Collaboration and productive partnerships between non-profit and for-profit organisations are needed to achieve positive outcomes. This would also help in shifting the culture across society to be more accountable.
- Because public funding is so critical to community services, financial sustainability and risk management is required to maximise value for stakeholders, including those at risk.
- Technology can be leveraged as a disruptor in the sector, driving efficiency through automation and the use of data analytics to inform decision-making.
- Volunteers are a key component of the Red Cross, with 20 times more volunteers than staff. In organisations which rely on volunteers, efficient volunteer activation and service delivery is key to retaining the trust of stakeholders.
- Large organisations in this sector, such as the Red Cross, have a key role to play in advocacy, lobbying and influencing both the public and government.



## Summary of Breakfast Comments



## Summary of Ideas

- Collaboration between non-profit and profit sectors enables business strategy, skills and talent to be shared, creating enhanced value and outcomes for community services and the broader economy.
- This collaboration is critical in changing the culture across business and society in Queensland. The culture and strategy of community services must shift towards becoming outcome-oriented and focused on highest-value solutions. All stakeholders, particularly sources of funding, need to be educated on this shift and embrace a long-term approach.
- High-quality skills and talent flowing into the non-profit sector is vital to ensure both continuous strategic efficiency and future success. One avenue to maintain a strong talent pipeline is via student placements. It is equally important to supplement this strength with a well-co-ordinated volunteer network, able to deliver significant value under efficient and effective governance and the right culture.

The Queensland Futures Institute acknowledges the support of UQ Business School Commerce Honours student, Jordan Ferrari, for his summary of the Breakfast.



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