



Queensland Communities in transition

CQ Wellbeing Hubs Increasing resilience in the community

The Central Highlands Region has an abundance of natural resources and has benefited from new jobs and investment related to the mining boom. However, while the boom brought prosperity to the region, it also brought a range of challenges.

These include shifting employment patterns, increased property values, skill shortages and demand in the town's service infrastructure. Often, while there is growth in some areas of the community there is decline in others. For example, housing values and rent skyrocketed, shutting some community members out of the housing market. When the boom collapsed, housing prices crashed and many jobs were lost, along with the services that went with them. In addition, ongoing drought conditions puts additional stress onto the region.

A 2017 report published by National Rural Health Alliance outlined that while the prevalence of mental illness in rural and remote Australia was similar to that in the major cities, access to services was substantially limited.¹

Central Queensland Wellbeing Hubs Inc (CQWH) is a grass roots initiative promoting both individual and community wellbeing. Activities, programs and events are provided in most Central Highlands towns, as well as Middlemount and Biloela, which minimises travel requirements for residents. CQWH is building community resilience so the region can better prepare for future boom or bust cycles and to cope with the impact of drought.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Wheel of Wellbeing
- Laughter Yoga
- DIY Happiness Training
- Sustainability Support
- Raising Mental Health Awareness
- Mindfulness, Self-care and Resilience





Launch of the CQ Wellbeing Hubs – photo by Nicole Mittan

CQ Wellbeing Hubs Inc has sprung from the Central Highland Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs Project originally administered by CentacareCQ, supported by the Central Highlands Regional Council and CQ Rural Health and funded by the Queensland Mental Health Commission.

The Hubs, established in Blackwater, Capella/Tieri, Springsure and the Sapphire Gemfields, were designed to grow capacity within the local communities to enhance existing skills and knowledge around mental wellbeing. However, as funding for the project came to a close in December 2019, community volunteers wanted to ensure continued wellbeing support was provided to their region and so formed the Incorporated Association of Central Queensland Wellbeing Hubs, officially launched on the 6th November 2019.

"It is a place-based approach that promotes all the good things about mental health and wellbeing as more of a preventative approach, as opposed to working with the population with a pre-existing mental illness." - Sallyann Hansen, CQ Wellbeing Hubs Inc Chair²

The CQWH vision is to help build resilient communities that support individuals to flourish. The hub is run by volunteer community members who bring their life experience, knowledge, skillsets and passion to promote good mental health and wellbeing in their community.

"There were no employee assistance programs in the region and bosses often become mentors and counsellors but are not trained for it. This new hub has allowed me to point my staff in the right direction for the help they need."

- Local Business Owner

Resilient communities that support individuals to flourish

COMMUNITY SUPPORTING COMMUNITY

Building community capacity

The Wheel of Wellbeing (WoW) is an experiential program, utilised by CQWH, which allows individuals to explore and identify what creates happiness and wellbeing in their lives and supports them to develop and maintain those factors. The Hubs have been designed on a community of practice model which builds capacity within the community so it can be maintained without the need for ongoing funding. This is supported via 'train the trainer' workshops. This is particularly important for regional areas where there are fewer services available especially for the smaller towns. These areas are still able to tap into the resources and support of the programs.

Laughter Yoga uses a mix of laughter, breathing exercises, playfulness, clapping and yoga stretching to release endorphins which increase positive emotions. The benefits of laughter yoga include improved circulation and reduced blood pressure, reduced stress and energising of the brain and body.

Some activities provided by the Hubs to date include:

- 1 Day & Half Day Wheel of Wellbeing (WoW) Introduction Workshops
- 4 Day DIY Happiness Workshops and 8 week intensive DIY Happiness Workshops
- Bush walking groups
- Macramé Workshops
- Aboriginal Painting workshops
- T-Shirt Bag Making Workshop
- Kids and Xmas Craft
- Friendship Feast & Picnic in the Park
- BBQ/Morning Tea/Events for Domestic Violence Week, Disability Action Week, Biggest Morning Tea, Mental Health Week, International Women's Week
- Workplace Wellbeing Workshops



"Start with a single person and make a ripple to form a community",

Kim Tompson's philosophy on the benefits of the hub. Kim is also a Laughter Yoga Coach and WoW trainer

This case study is part of a series of case studies that have been developed as part of the Queensland Communities in Transition Program. Prepared by The Ecoefficiency Group as part of Clean Growth Choices Consortium with funding from Queensland Department of Environment and Science, 2019 For further information, visit www.cleangrowthchoices.org

1. National Rural Health Alliance Inc, December 2017, Fact Sheet – Mental Health in Rural and Remote Australia, www.ruralhealth.org.au/sites/default/files/publications/nrha-mental-health-factsheet-dec-2017.pdf

2. CQ News, 7 November 2019, Wellbeing hub has launched in CQ, m.cqnews.com.au/news/wellbeing-hub-has-launched-in-cq/3872930/