



QPASTT

Impact Report

2020 - 2021

About QPASTT

Founded in 1995, QPASTT (Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma) provides specialised, culturally responsive services to promote the health and wellbeing of people in Australia who have sought safety from persecution, torture and war related trauma.

QPASTT is a non-profit Company Limited by Guarantee and a registered charity with no political or religious affiliations. Our work is funded by the Commonwealth and Queensland governments.

QPASTT is a state-wide organisation, with offices in Brisbane, Logan, Inala, Cairns, Townsville and Toowoomba and outreach services across Queensland.

QPASTT is a member of the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT), a network of eight specialist rehabilitation agencies that respond to the needs of survivors of torture and trauma who have come to Australia from overseas. There is a FASSTT member agency in each state and territory in Australia.

QPASTT is a member of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), a global membership fighting to eradicate torture and offer health-based rehabilitation services to help torture victims rebuild their lives.

QPASTT acknowledges the First Peoples of Australia and their leaders past, present and emerging. We recognise the continuing trauma caused by losses of children, language, lore and land and the impact that this continues to have on psychological, physical and spiritual wellbeing. We recognise that since time immemorial, First Peoples have nurtured communities of belonging and thriving and we work in solidarity towards a future of healing and justice.

QPASTT is committed to creating a safe, inclusive and equitable environment for people from all genders, sexualities, religions and cultures.



Our Vision

...is for people from refugee backgrounds to live lives liberated from the harms of torture, trauma and human rights injustice.

Our Purpose

...is to nurture meaningful futures by assisting people from refugee backgrounds to heal, belong and thrive in our community.

Our Values

KINDNESS

We care. In all our work, survivors of torture and trauma come first.

OPTIMISM

We believe in meaningful futures. We are committed to healing being a journey of recovery across mind, body and spirit.

PERSEVERENCE

We don't give up. We understand that healing requires time, patience and courage for individuals, families and communities.

FAIRNESS

We believe that recovery from trauma is about justice and that to heal is a human right. We strive to build opportunities so that survivors of torture and trauma are able to belong and thrive in the community.

HONESTY

We act openly and ethically. We are committed to delivering impactful services.



Chair's Welcome

On behalf of the QPASTT Board, it is my pleasure to present the 2021 QPASTT Impact Report.

QPASTT is a community-based, specialist rehabilitation service supporting the needs and aspirations of survivors of torture and trauma. Since our foundation in 1995, we have supported over 60,000 people from refugee backgrounds to find healing and belonging as they rebuild thriving futures here in Australia.

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to disrupt communities across the globe. Australia's border closures continued to affect the arrival of refugees into Australia. The Australian Government granted only 5,947 visas in 2020/21 out of a possible 13,750 annual places available in the Humanitarian Settlement Program. In terms of real arrivals, Australia welcomed only 1932 people, with 240 arriving into Queensland. 2021 also saw continued global unrest, particularly in Ethiopia's Tigray region and Afghanistan, affecting diverse communities here in Australia.

QPASTT is committed to supporting communities through these events. Throughout 2021, we adapted our services during lockdowns to offer remote support and telehealth. We worked closely with the Afghan community to deliver a crisis response across Queensland for our clients, communities and other service providers. Our Afghan Response Team is supporting clients and communities through the ongoing impacts of the Taliban takeover, including settling people who have fled the conflict and supporting communities through the ongoing trauma experienced as the situation in Afghanistan continues to unfold.

Despite limited arrival numbers into Queensland, demand for QPASTT's services has remained steady. In 2021, we supported 6,207 clients through both individual or family counselling and group work.

In 2021, QPASTT celebrated 25 years since our incorporation in 1996. To celebrate this milestone, we launched a publication *Healing, Belonging, Thriving, Justice: celebrating 25 years of QPASTT*, sharing the stories of QPASTT's history and impact over a quarter of a century of service. We also launched a refreshed logo and website to reflect our vision, purpose and trauma recovery framework. I invite you to explore our new website and read the stories of QPASTT that display the achievements of our organisation and the refugee communities we serve.

In 2021, at the request of the Friends of HEAL foundation, QPASTT assumed responsibility for the ongoing delivery of the HEAL expressive arts therapy program as part of our commitment to expanding the therapeutic modalities we can offer refugee survivors of torture and trauma. QPASTT and HEAL have worked closely together since 2004. We share the vision of ensuring that trauma is not a barrier for learning and wellbeing and that young people and communities have the opportunity to heal and thrive.

On behalf of the QPASTT Board, I acknowledge the passion and dedication of our diverse, multicultural staff across Queensland who are all committed to supporting our clients and communities through an often complex and challenging policy and political environment. We appreciate your commitment to respect and justice for people who have sought to find safety and rebuild their futures in Australia.

Leadership is vital to the success of any organisation and service. We are also grateful for the strong and effective leadership provided by our Senior Leaders (Amy Burkett, Fernanda Torresi, Liz Gordon, Vickie Pastellas, Angela Ng and Niyati Acharya) and Team Leaders (Elham Rezaei, Farah Suleman, Jo-Ann Cochran, Eli Moore, Katie Artiss, Meredith Hands, Naomi Brown, Natalie Youssef, Noemie Rigaud, Ruth Power, Susannah Tipping, Vedrana Jovicic) across the organisation. We are also deeply grateful to our Co-CEOs of three years, Jamila Padhee and Ignacio Correa-Velez for their leadership of our unique QPASTT culture, characterised by warmth, welcome, kindness and respect. Ignacio, our Co-CEO for Innovation and Impact has decided to return to QUT and will be sorely missed, but remains part of our QPASTT family as a Board Director, as well as continuing his involvement in a range of projects he has initiated and is committed to continuing.

I recognise the dedication of the Directors of QPASTT (Dr Ian Mannion, Fraser Power, Robin Lonergan, Adele Rice AM, Dr Pamela Douglas and Raziq Qasimi) leading us towards our vision while remaining true to our purpose and values. I particularly acknowledge the contribution of our outgoing member, Dr Lyndall Kleinschmidt who has stepped down as Board Director and Secretary after 14 years of service. Lyndall's experience and expertise in mental health delivery, particularly for children and young people, has been a wonderful contribution to the QPASTT Board.

Finally, on behalf of QPASTT I extend our deepest gratitude to Queensland's refugee and cultural communities. Founded to respond to community needs and aspirations, QPASTT can only remain effective and relevant through the continued input and guidance from, and partnership with, community leaders, families and individual members.

Professor Emeritus Keithia Wilson
Chair



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Co-CEO's Report

Listening and responding to the needs of community remains at the core of our work.

We are investing in programs that enable community-led healing, including co-designing group work with community, recognising the wisdom and efficacy of traditional and culture-based healing modalities alongside the accepted Western view of psychotherapy. In 2021, over 4,500 people participated in QPASTT social and therapeutic groups. To support this investment, we have audited and refreshed our group practice framework and systems to ensure we are supporting our skilled group facilitators with quality induction and supervision, and that we are capturing data to report on the impact of this work.

We know that community-led programs are the best approach. In 2021, we supported the Queensland African Communities Council (QACC) to establish an African Youth Centre in Redbank Plains. Importantly, this support rests on a mutual understanding that QACC leads the programs at the centre. Community-led organisations are deeply connected to their members and have the expertise to respond to issues; they just need the resources and support to act.

In 2021, we have continued to frame our work through the concepts of Healing, Belonging, Thriving and Justice. We know that healing is dependent on the restoration of justice for survivors of torture and trauma, and supporting them to find belonging in their community. We continue to advocate and educate, at the direct and systemic level, to address the economic and social determinants of health and wellbeing and ensure that governments, service providers and local communities uphold the human rights of refugees and people seeking asylum. In 2021, we trained 1,477 participants from a range of service providers to be trauma-informed and we delivered eight lectures at Queensland universities focusing on the health, wellbeing and human rights of people from refugee backgrounds.

Our Counsellor/Advocates have supported 248 people seeking asylum in both held and community detention. We were glad to see some of our clients released from prolonged held detention after 9 years; we continue to advocate for the immediate cessation of held detention and the subsequent release from detention of refugees and people seeking asylum. Prolonged, indefinite detention is harmful to mental and physical health, causes ongoing trauma, and contributes to greater risk of self-harm and suicide. QPASTT and World Wellness Group have been funded by the Queensland Government to deliver the Asylum Seeker Mental Health Connect program to help people seeking asylum manage trauma related symptoms and emotional distress, build coping and problem-solving skills and develop connections to social supports and other services.

We are grateful to our Board, leadership team, staff, volunteers and our stakeholder and government partners for their continued collaboration and commitment to our vision of supporting people to live lives liberated from the harms of torture, trauma and human rights injustice. In particular, we thank the communities and community leaders who are so dedicated to helping people rebuild thriving futures here in Australia - we deeply value your guidance and partnership.

Dr Ignacio-Correa Velez and Jamila Padhee
Co-CEOs

In 2021, Dr Ignacio Correa-Velez resigned as Co-CEO to take up an opportunity to return to academia as a Senior Lecturer in the School of Public Health and Social Work at Queensland University of Technology.

Ignacio has been a close partner of QPASTT for many years, collaborating on research and projects that have highlighted the needs and aspirations of refugee survivors of torture and trauma and ensured QPASTT's services are evidence-based. As Co-CEO since 2019, along with Jamila Padhee, Ignacio has played a critical role in QPASTT's development, helping to shape a future-fit organisation that remains strongly focused on impact, innovation and advocacy to deliver our vision of refugee survivors living lives liberated from the harms of torture, trauma and human rights injustices.

QPASTT is deeply grateful for Ignacio's longstanding commitment to the work of QPASTT and the strong and lasting relationships he has built with members of Queensland's refugee communities, government, universities, and our settlement sector colleagues. While Ignacio will be dearly missed as Co-CEO, we wish him our heartfelt congratulations on his new role and are delighted that Ignacio's passion and expertise will continue to contribute to QPASTT as he joins the QPASTT Board of Directors in 2022.



CFO's Report

2021 was a year of investment for QPASTT as we invested in our staff and systems and supported our community partners in new ventures and events.

The board signed off an IT project that included the upgrade of hardware, software and background applications across the organisation. The board also signed off a substantial donation to support the establishment of the African Youth Centre by the Queensland African Communities Council, which will benefit many of our clients in the African community. QPASTT was on-track to have a breakeven result during the budget process. The investments in the IT project and QACC Youth Centre resulted in an overall deficit position of \$142,000.

2021 continued to be a challenging year for our clients and the mental health sector. Uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic created additional demands for our services. The Queensland Government acknowledged this pressure and provided additional funding for QPASTT to expand our support to Queensland's diverse cultural communities. QPASTT's overall revenue in 2021 was \$8.59 million, an increase of 9.3% compared to the previous financial year.

QPASTT generates the bulk of its income from government grants. In 2021, total grant funding was \$7.3 million, with total non-grant funding of \$1.3 million. A low to no-interest environment continues to reduce our return in term deposit. QPASTT's self-generated income has reduced to 4.34%, which means we rely heavily on grants and other non-grants funding to support our daily operations.

Human resources is QPASTT's biggest expense. It includes salaries and wages, leave provisions and superannuation, as well as continued professional development and training. The introduction of a 1.35% QLeave Levy in 1 January with the continued responsibility to maintain long service leave provision added additional costs to our human resources expenses. Total human resources expenses in 2021 equalled \$7.08 million or 83% of our income - 4% higher than 2020. The increase of our human resources expenses is a reflection on the increasing demand of our services during this challenging period.

A healthy asset to liability ratio of 3.1:1 continues to support QPASTT's future financial outlook. Future wage and superannuation increases, as well as various higher than inflation growth expenses, will continue to challenge our balance between financial management responsibilities and QPASTT's commitment to maintaining high quality and responsive services for our clients and communities. Our 2020-21 audited financial statements were prepared by our auditors Haywards Chartered Accountants and comply with all the applicable Australian Accounting Standards. The audit report is unqualified.

Finally, we would like to thank our funders for their continuous support. Your commitment has made a positive difference to our clients and communities in their recovery journey.

Angela Ng
Chief Financial Officer



QPASTT'S MAJOR FUNDING IN 2022

Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT) (Federal Department of Health)	\$5,071,660
Queensland Health	\$1,152,546

Key Figures

IN 2020/2021...

QPASTT supported **6,207** clients from **82** countries of origin.

- TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN
- Iraq
 - Iran
 - Democratic Republic of Congo
 - Afghanistan
 - Eritrea
 - Sri Lanka
 - Syria
 - Burma (Republic of the Union of Myanmar)
 - Somalia
 - Ethiopia



We supported **1,635** individuals with direct counselling, across **13,909** sessions.



We received **1,315** new referrals (compared to 635 in 2020).

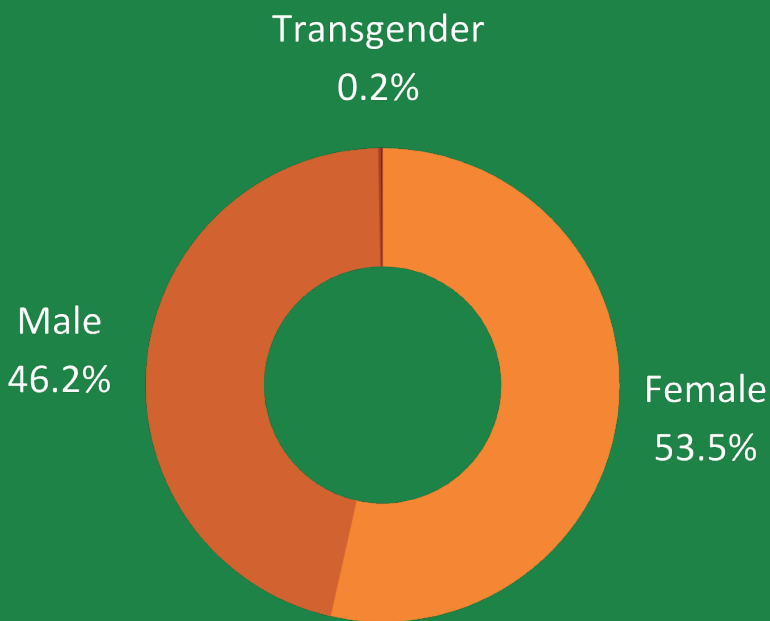


4,572 people participated in QPASTT groups, with a further 2,862 involved in QPASTT events and activities.

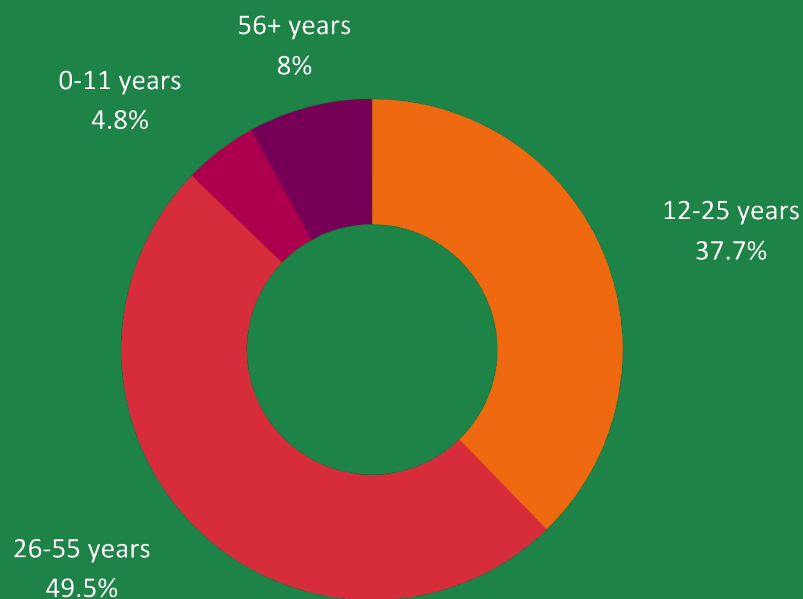


We supported **232** people seeking asylum.

Gender breakdown of counselling clients:



Age breakdown of counselling clients:



42.5%

of our counselling clients were 25 and under.

QPASTT's Strategic Framework

Our Challenge

Oppression, persecution and human rights violations can affect daily living and shatter trust in humanity.

A survivor's ability to recover from trauma is impacted by:

- Feelings of powerlessness, anxiety, grief, distress, fear, humiliation, guilt and shame within individuals
- Separation from family and isolation and stigma within communities
- Social and economic disadvantage and lack of opportunity in the community
- Public opinion, including discrimination in Australian society

Our Opportunity

Working together with refugee and local communities, we can:

- Reduce stigma and support people to heal from the impacts of trauma
- Build safety and connection so that people feel a sense of belonging
- Support individuals, families and communities by creating opportunities for them to thrive
- Advocate for community empathy and justice for survivors

Our Response

QPASTT will achieve our vision by supporting people from refugee backgrounds to heal, belong and thrive in our community.

HEALING THE PAST

Healing the past is a journey of recovery across mind, body and spirit. We will enable recovery from trauma for individuals, families and communities.

BUILDING BELONGING

A sense of safety is fundamental for healing. Without belonging, safety is not felt. In this way, healing and belonging are interlocked. We will work with communities to build belonging for refugee survivors of torture and trauma.

NURTURING THRIVING FUTURES

Positive social and economic conditions for families are critical for reducing the risks of intergenerational trauma. We will decrease the future burden of trauma for families and nurture thriving futures.

RESTORING JUSTICE

The needs of trauma survivors can be misunderstood by agencies, local communities and service systems which results in inequity of outcome. We will empower the service environment and local communities so they are better able to respond to the aspirations of survivors of torture and trauma.

COLLABORATING FOR IMPACT

The social determinants of health are a barrier to trauma recovery. We will work with others to ensure the experience of trauma is not a barrier to social and economic success for survivors of torture and trauma from refugee backgrounds.

Healing the Past

Healing the past is a journey of recovery across mind, body and spirit. QPASTT enables recovery from trauma for individuals, families and communities, nurturing healing by providing compassionate and caring counselling where everyone feels:

- Safe welcome and understood
- Assisted with their needs and aspirations
- Supported in their individual and family recovery journey.

Counselling

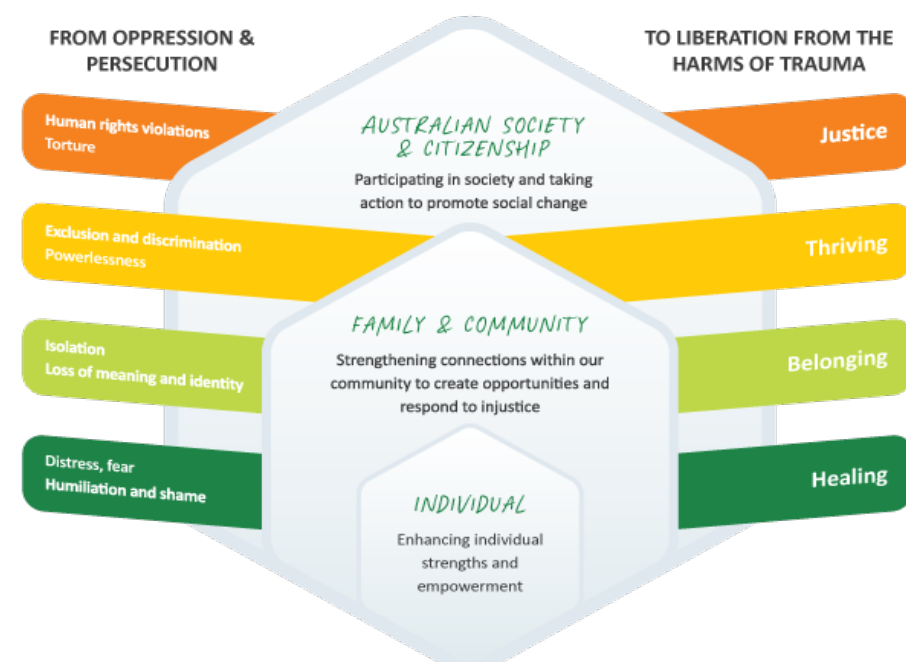
In 2021, QPASTT Counsellor/Advocates supported 1635 clients over 13,909 counselling sessions.

Every individual is unique and traumatic experiences can affect people in many different ways. Trauma can affect people of all ages, cultures, genders and life experiences. Trauma can affect relationships and be passed down to children intergenerationally. During trauma, people feel frightened, helpless, isolated and without power and control. Therefore, the major focus of trauma recovery is helping people to feel safe and empowered.

Although people from refugee backgrounds have survived horrific experiences, they bring with them numerous strengths and tremendous resilience of spirit.

QPASTT's Counsellor/Advocates build on these strengths and resilience, working from a therapeutic framework that sees refugee trauma recovery as a journey from oppression and persecution towards liberation. By focusing on the restoration of justice and supporting clients to heal, belong and thrive, we work to ensure the impacts of torture and trauma are not a barrier to wellbeing and meaningful participation in family and community life.

Our refugee trauma recovery framework



New Intake Model for Referrals

In April, QPASTT launched a new intake model to manage our long waiting lists.

Following extensive consultation with staff, the QPASTT Board, community leaders and referring organisations, a new Intake and Connect team was established, offering a central point of connection for clients referred into counselling and group work and ensuring that all referrals in to QPASTT are assessed by a practitioner in a timely manner.

Intake and Connect practitioners are able to support new referrals with short-term support and interventions to address their immediate needs and identify high risk or vulnerable clients.

Supporting People Seeking Asylum

In 2021, QPASTT supported 232 people seeking asylum with counselling and trauma-specialist mental health support.

QPASTT has supported people seeking asylum living in the community or in held detention since 1999/2000. We have heard their stories; we have witnessed their desperation and hopelessness, and also their strengths and resilience. We have seen the values and capabilities that refugees and people seeking asylum have to offer to the community.

In 2021, QPASTT increased our presence in hubs and clinics to provide place-based mental health support to people seeking asylum, including in Logan, Gatton, and Indooroopilly and at the Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation (BITA). We also increased our advocacy for people seeking asylum, including a large focus on legal representation and stakeholder engagement.

Some of our current clients are entering their ninth year of held detention. QPASTT does not support the prolonged and indefinite detention of people seeking asylum. It contravenes their human rights, is harmful to their mental and physical health, causes ongoing trauma and contributes to a greater risk of self-harm and suicide. It also has a detrimental impact on the families, friends and communities of people seeking asylum, both in Australia and overseas.

Asylum Seeker Mental Health Connect

In 2021, QPASTT and the World Wellness Group (WWG) implemented the Asylum Seeker Mental Health Connect program, a dedicated team of cross cultural and trauma specialist mental health practitioners working together to provide a timely response for people seeking asylum with complex mental health needs.

Following a psychosocial assessment, we support clients through four to six sessions of counselling to help manage trauma related symptoms and emotional distress, build coping and problem-solving skills and develop connections to social supports and other services. Those requiring further specialist trauma-related support are referred to other QPASTT programs, while those with complex mental health needs including addiction, substance abuse or sub-acute care needs are referred to World Wellness Group for support and case management by specialist nurses.

Funded by the Queensland Department of Health, the team delivers services in outreach locations and via telehealth to provide state-wide access. The program has enabled us to respond to referrals within 2-weeks and reduce the waiting list for long-term counselling.

Building Belonging

A sense of safety is fundamental for healing. Without belonging, people do not feel safe. Healing and belonging are interlocked. QPASTT works with communities to build belonging for refugee survivors of torture and trauma, enabling opportunities for survivors to connect and heal with others in groups where:

- Body, mind and spirit are nourished through new friendships and traditional wellness
- Wellbeing is nurtured through a focus on movement, relaxation and creative therapies (art, music, dance, drama, craft)

Group work can offer an antidote to the isolation that results from trauma. The collective learning, repair of trust, confidence and relationship building fosters a sense of belonging and validation which supports healing and recovery.

In 2021, QPASTT delivered 34+ social and therapeutic groups to 4,572 participants with a further 2,862 people involved in QPASTT events and activities.

Refreshing our Group Work Practice

In 2021, QPASTT completed an audit of our group work practice. The audit examined the skills and experiences of our group work facilitators and staff, youth workers and counsellor advocates, as well as a review of trauma-recovery group work within research literature and the experience of FASSTT member services.

As a result of our audit, QPASTT has updated our group work procedures to improve how we articulate, communicate and promote the purpose and outcomes of our therapeutic groups and to improve our record keeping for service improvement and reporting. We have appointed an external group supervision facilitator for QPASTT group workers, and designed a targeted clinical and procedural induction for group workers.

Facilitating group work for survivors of refugee torture and trauma is complex work, requiring specialised skills. Our group work audit is part of our ongoing continuing improvement to ensure our services are evidence-based, well supported by systems and processes, and that our staff and the quality of our practice are supported and nurtured through appropriate induction and ongoing supervision.



Supporting Communities of Belonging

Guided by the expertise of communities, QPASTT's teams of Community Workers and Community Connectors work closely with community leaders and members across Queensland to create opportunities for community-based healing and capacity building.

IN BRISBANE...

In partnership with Multicultural Australia, QPASTT's Intake and Connect team worked with Brisbane's Bhutanese community, organising two community sessions to share information and connect the community with service providers including Centrelink and Refugee and Immigration Legal Services (RAILS). QPASTT also worked with the community in consultation around youth-specific issues.

IN CAIRNS...

Through consultation with the Cairns African Association, the community requested QPASTT support them with parenting and relationship workshops.

QPASTT was invited to deliver ongoing workshops with the community, exploring relationship challenges, strengths, cultural influences, settlement challenges, communication and focusing on emotions.

Following some workshop engagement, members of the community and other service providers have noted improvements in positive relationships between couples who attended.



IN TOWNSVILLE...

QPASTT collaborated with TAFE Queensland to consult with local Afghan women on what supports they needed in response to the crisis in Afghanistan.

Through multiple consultation sessions, the women highlighted the need for legal support for visa applications for family members, facilitated group discussions focused on the impact of the crisis on their wellbeing and for the women to offer peer support and connection to each other.

As a result of these consultations, the women have requested a monthly group meeting to continue to provide connection, support and a focus on wellbeing.

IN TOOWOOMBA...

Following community consultation and needs assessment, QPASTT facilitated women's groups for clients from the Êzidî and Afghan communities in Toowoomba. The Êzidî Women's Group involved short-term interventions focused on sensory modulation and increasing psychosocial awareness through functional activity and skill development.

The Afghan Women's Group provided a safe space for participants to learn more about parenting, human rights, socialise and do some gentle exercises and stretches through yoga. The feedback from the participants included a noticeable increase in confidence in day-to-day activities, increased knowledge of strategies to help with stress and worry and the development of meaningful connections with other women in the community.

Supporting Communities of Belonging

CONTINUED

COVID-19 COMMUNITY LEADERS WORKING GROUP

Formed in March 2020, the COVID 19 Community Leaders Working Group continued to meet fortnightly throughout 2020-21 to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting Queensland's cultural communities to be informed with the latest information and public health measures, identifying barriers for communities as a result of COVID-19, and undertaking significant advocacy to governments and service providers in response.

Subgroups of the working group focused on communication, mental health and wellbeing, economic security, domestic and family violence, family support and young people.

QPASTT supported the Working Group to organise and host a range of forums with experts including Queensland's Chief Health Officer, staff from Services Australia, and state and federal government representatives.

Some key outcomes from the forums were ensuring timely and appropriate in-language information was a key focus of the group, especially in relation to home-learning during lockdowns. This process has built local capacity for translation work and increased understanding for government and services of the need for plain-language information.

The forums also raised awareness in communities about the impact of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing, domestic and family violence, and where to seek support.



COVID-19 COMMUNITY LEADERS WORKING GROUP CHAIR SABA ABRAHAM WAS RECOGNISED FOR HER WORK IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19, AWARDED THE QUEENSLAND LOCAL HERO FOR 2022 AS PART OF THE AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS.



SUPPORTING COMMUNITY LEADERS

QPASTT's community engagement team undertook 81 consultative meetings with community and faith leaders especially with those from new and emerging communities.

QPASTT's work with cultural communities in 2021 included support for development of leadership and governance capabilities; advocacy and support raising for issues of conflict in home countries; and forums in response to the impact of COVID-19, including an Employment Forum and a Small Business and Social Enterprise Forum.

Leaders indicated feeling appreciated, heard, respected and supported:

"THE FORUMS WERE REALLY USEFUL AND IMPORTANT FOR
DECISION-MAKERS TO LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE."

Feedback from a Community Leader

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO SERIOUS VILIFICATION AND HATE CRIMES

QPASTT supported the Community Leaders Forum to provide a submission to the Queensland Government Parliamentary Inquiry into Serious Vilification and Hate Crimes.

71 community leaders provided input to the submission.

[Read it here on the QPASTT website.](#)

Nurturing Thriving Futures

QPASTT focuses on improving the social and economic determinants of health so that individuals and families have less stressors and are able to prioritise their healing. We do this through group and community-led programs that help people manage the impacts of trauma, develop the knowledge and skills to enhance their success in education and employment, nurture positive family relationships, and adjust to settlement stressors related to establishing life in Australia.

Many children and young people from refugee backgrounds have experienced direct or indirect trauma because of persecution and conflict. Additionally, if people do not have the opportunity to heal from trauma, they can unknowingly pass it onto future generations. Their children may experience high levels of stress, difficulties with attachment and disconnection from their culture and community. QPASTT's work with children, young people and families focuses on ensuring trauma is not a barrier to children growing, learning and thriving in Australia.

In 2021, QPASTT supported 248 children (<16 years) and 447 young people (16-25) through individual counselling.

Supporting Positive Parenting

Parents from refugee backgrounds have incredible strength and parenting skills, but their natural parenting abilities have been altered by the experience of war, displacement, and living in a refugee camp. After finding safety in Australia, learning to adapt parenting styles to Australian cultural norms and expectations is yet another aspect of settlement transition for people from refugee backgrounds.

For established communities, the next generation of parents have reached out to QPASTT to provide parenting groups to help bridge the divide between Australian expectations and cultural parenting practices.

QPASTT has developed strengths-based parenting groups that offer tailored, culturally informed resources that build on the existing skills of newly arrived communities to support them to raise a healthy family in a new country.

In 2021, QPASTT delivered parenting discussion groups in partnership with C&K for parents in Ipswich and Redbank Plains, as well as the Staines Memorial College Community Hub in Redbank Plains.

The parenting discussions ensured community members had the opportunity to strengthen their parenting skills in a new country and culture and learn strategies to support young people and teenagers growing up in two cultures.

Participants recommended ongoing parenting groups as well as groups that targeted fathers and young people to build positive parenting relationships. As a result, QPASTT has established the Redbank Plains Men's Parenting Group.



Supporting Young People

THE GLOW GIRLS INITIATIVE

QPASTT's Youth Enterprise and Innovation Team has collaborated with the founders of the GLOW (Girls leading our World) Girls initiative to promote resilience and social connection in refugee communities through healthy role modelling.

QPASTT supported the GLOW leaders to run training sessions with young women focusing on personal growth, leadership and communication across communities. Five workshops were delivered to participants from the South Sudanese, Burundian, Afghan, Sri Lankan and Eritrean communities. GLOW leaders and participants also took part in QPASTT's Girl Talk program that focuses on personal identity, healthy relationships and reproductive health. QPASTT also supported the GLOW Girls Leadership Camp.

Participants in the GLOW Girls activities have reported increased levels of confidence in communicating with other young people, elders and communities. Young women have also reported an increased knowledge of risk and protective factors.

The GLOW Girls was featured in the Alcohol and Drug Foundations' 2021 [Local Drug Action Team Highlights report](#).

YOUTH VOICE GOVERNMENT ROUNDTABLE

In 2021, Youth Voice planned for a Government Roundtable event in collaboration with Multicultural Youth Queensland and the Future Leaders Advocacy Group, hosting the roundtable in August.

Seven government representatives attended, including from local city councils and the Australian Federal Police, hearing youth leaders present their top three priorities for youth and how they would like these to be addressed in the community or at a systemic level. Topics covered unemployment, youth mental health, identity, access to training and higher education, the needs of newly arrived young people, immigration and visa issues, and the impact of COVID-19.

The experience of racism and discrimination, at school, at work and in the community, was a particular issue addressed by the young speakers, who shared the heavy impact this had on their lives and the importance of talking about systemic racism.



EXPANDING YOUTH VOICE INTO TOWNSVILLE

Youth Voice is a forum for young people aged 12-25 years from diverse backgrounds to explore ideas and educate their peers and the broader community on social justice and policy issues that affect young people. QPASTT established Youth Voice in 2011.

After requests from the Townsville community and service sector for more focus and support for young people, QPASTT secured funding from the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs to initiate Youth Voice in Townsville. The Youth Voice Committee has been established, with over 20 young people planning projects and events to address social justice issues relevant to the Townsville community. Members of the Youth Voice Committee say they value being part of a leadership program with like-minded young people and are excited to have the ability to make a difference on a social justice issue they are passionate about.

Restoring Justice for Survivors

The goal of persecution and torture is to destroy the human spirit and fracture communities.

To heal and belong are fundamental human rights. The restoration of justice means enabling equitable opportunities for refugee survivors of torture and trauma to thrive, belong and contribute.

We do this through a focus on:

- Investing in opportunities to improve access and equity.
- Influence and advocacy that amplifies the voices of survivors and upholds equity of outcomes.
- Research and evaluation that contributes to our understanding of recovery impact.
- Training to enable colleagues in other agencies to become trauma-informed and culturally safe.
- Partnering with community leaders to foster community healing and reduce stigma.

Advocacy

QPASTT's systemic advocacy aims to amplify the voices of survivors, including people seeking asylum, and influence policy and practice. We do this through submissions to government enquiries, participation in advisory committees and sector networks, and cross-agency collaborations.

IN 2021

- QPASTT prepared a Submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. The submission included a number of de-identified case studies based on clients' experiences that highlighted two key areas of concern: (1) the need for culturally-responsive and trauma-informed support services for people with disabilities who had experienced torture and trauma, and (2) the many barriers people seeking asylum face to proper assessment, diagnosis and care due to their visa status and lack of entitlements. QPASTT also participated with other FASSTT agencies in a hearing with the Commission to highlight the issues faced by people seeking asylum with a disability.
- As a member of the Queensland Community Alliance (QCA), QPASTT and fellow members successfully advocated to the Queensland Government for funding to support work rights education among people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.
- Throughout the year, QPASTT used a variety of approaches to advocate for the health and wellbeing of people seeking asylum who were either in detention or living in the community. This included the establishment of the Asylum Seekers Mental Health Working sub-group (chaired by QPASTT) which is part of the Multicultural Mental Health Working Group (also chaired by QPASTT). The sub-group developed a Mental Health Referral Pathways to ensure a coordinated approach to support the mental health and wellbeing of asylum seekers living in the community.



COHESIVE COMMUNITIES COALITION

QPASTT is a member of the Cohesive Communities Coalition – a coalition of more than 20 diverse ethnic and religious communities and organisations working in partnership with the Queensland Human Rights Commission, campaigning for legislative reform in relation to serious vilification and hate crimes.

Following successful advocacy by the Coalition, the Queensland Government announced a Parliamentary Inquiry into the issue on April 2021. QPASTT, in partnership with the Community Leaders Forum and Multicultural Australia, made a written submission to the Inquiry and was invited to present at one of the Public Hearings.

Comments from community leaders to inform the submission included:

"IN THE CURRENT COVID SITUATION, WE ASIANS ARE SEEN AS PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT THE VIRUS AND INFECTED OTHER PEOPLE. WE ARE SEEN AS MOVING AROUND WITH THE VIRUS TO INFECT OTHER PEOPLE. THIS HAVE IMPACTED ON THE MENTAL HEALTH AND MANY ARE SOCIALLY ISOLATED. MY COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAVE REPORTED SUCH CASES HAPPENING TO THEM ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS, BUT BECAUSE OF LANGUAGE THEY CANNOT RETALIATE, ALSO THEY ARE AFRAID. . . THEY COULD NOT REPORT."

"I ARRIVED TO AUSTRALIA AS A REFUGEE AND I CAME FROM SYRIA, AND I WAS DOING A LOT OF ADVOCACY ABOUT BRINGING SYRIAN REFUGEES TO THIS COUNTRY. THERE WAS AN EVENT AND I WAS INVITED TO SPEAK ABOUT IT, AND WHEN I STARTED TALKING, A PERSON ATTACKED ME PUBLICLY... HE WAS SAYING "TERRORIST, GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY, GO BACK TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM... "I WAS SO SCARED. AND THAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS, DIFFERENT EVENTS, SIMILAR THINGS."

"NOT ONLY MAKING INDIVIDUALS ACCOUNTABLE BUT ALSO ORGANISATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS...YOU KNOW, MAKING GOVERNMENTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS, AND MEDIA ALSO, YOU KNOW, HOW MEDIA HAS PORTRAYED THE PEOPLE FROM SOUTH SUDAN, OUT OF PROPORTION, SO YOU MUST HAVE A WAY OF CHALLENGING THE MEDIA FOR THEM TO BE ACCOUNTABLE, BUT IN AUSTRALIA THE MEDIA IS NEVER HELD ACCOUNTABLE, YOU KNOW BECAUSE THEY WILL PUBLISH ANYTHING THAT SELL THEIR NEWSPAPERS."

"I THINK IS LIKE LOWERING THE THRESHOLD, BECAUSE YOU KNOW THE CURRENT THRESHOLD IS VERY HIGH, YOU KNOW, YOU CAN SAY ANYTHING AND GET AWAY WITH IT... SO LOWERING THE THRESHOLD SENDS A MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY, I THINK THAT'S THE BIG ISSUE HERE... " "SOME OF US ARE CAPABLE OF CHALLENGING OTHERS WHEN WE FACE THESE SITUATIONS, WE CAN WRITE, WE SPEAK THE LANGUAGE, WE ARE CAPABLE OF LOOKING AFTER OURSELVES, BUT THERE ARE MANY WHO'VE HAD WORSE EXPERIENCES THAN US, AND THEY CANNOT DO THESE COMPLAINTS"

The Queensland Parliament Legal Affairs and Safety Committee has released its report following their inquiry. [Read it here.](#)

[Read the submission by the Community Leaders Forum here.](#)

Research and Evaluation

QPASTT aims to cultivate an organisational culture where research and evaluation improve practice and inform advocacy to assist people from refugee backgrounds to heal, belong and thrive in a just Australian community. In 2021, QPASTT continued to be engaged in a number of research projects in partnership with Australian universities and research institutions:

- Understanding the contextual factors of psychosocial interventions in relation to the recovery of survivors of torture and trauma in a naturalistic setting. This is an ongoing longitudinal study conducted in partnership with Associate Professor Kate Murray from QUT School of Psychology and Counselling.
- Exploring food security and the role of cultural foods among people with lived refugee experiences using a co-design approach. This research is in partnership with Tina Gingell (PhD Candidate, School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, QUT), Professor Danielle Gallegos (School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, QUT), and Associate Professor Kate Murray (School of Psychology and Counselling, QUT).
- Stronger Futures – 5-year NHMRC-funded Centre of Research Excellence (CRE) – Prevention of Intergenerational Trauma. QPASTT is a community research partner in this CRE led by researchers from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Melbourne (Prof Stephanie Brown, Associate Professor Rebecca Giallo, Dr Elisha Riggs and colleagues). The CRE's five-year goal is to improve social and emotional wellbeing, family functioning and resilience in families and communities disproportionately impacted by intergenerational trauma and family violence. In the longer term, the aim is to contribute to reversal of the current upward trends in rates of suicide, self-harm and mental health disorders in children and young people.

In 2021, QPASTT commenced the evaluation of a number of QPASTT programs and services, including the Women's Skills Share Group (Logan) and the Asylum Seekers Mental Health Connect program.

From 1 July 2020, QPASTT and all other FASSTT services began the implementation of WHO-5 Wellbeing Index as an outcome measure across both individual counselling and group work. The WHO-5 is a generic measure of current psychological wellbeing and has been used with refugee populations across cultural settings and age groups (from 9 y/o and above).

Preliminary analysis of active QPASTT clients between 1 July 2020 and 30 April 2021 showed:

- Counselling clients report lower levels of wellbeing at first assessment compared to group work clients (43.9/100 vs 63.8/100).
- Although more data at closure/exit is needed, the data show a trend towards an increase in wellbeing over time among individual counselling clients.
- Group work clients with low levels of wellbeing at first assessment report a clinically significant increase of wellbeing over time (increase of 19.9 in WHO-5 score on average).



Collaborating for Impact

QPASTT collaborates with clients, communities and service providers to address the social, economic and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing so that each survivor has access to the resources they need to recover from torture and trauma.

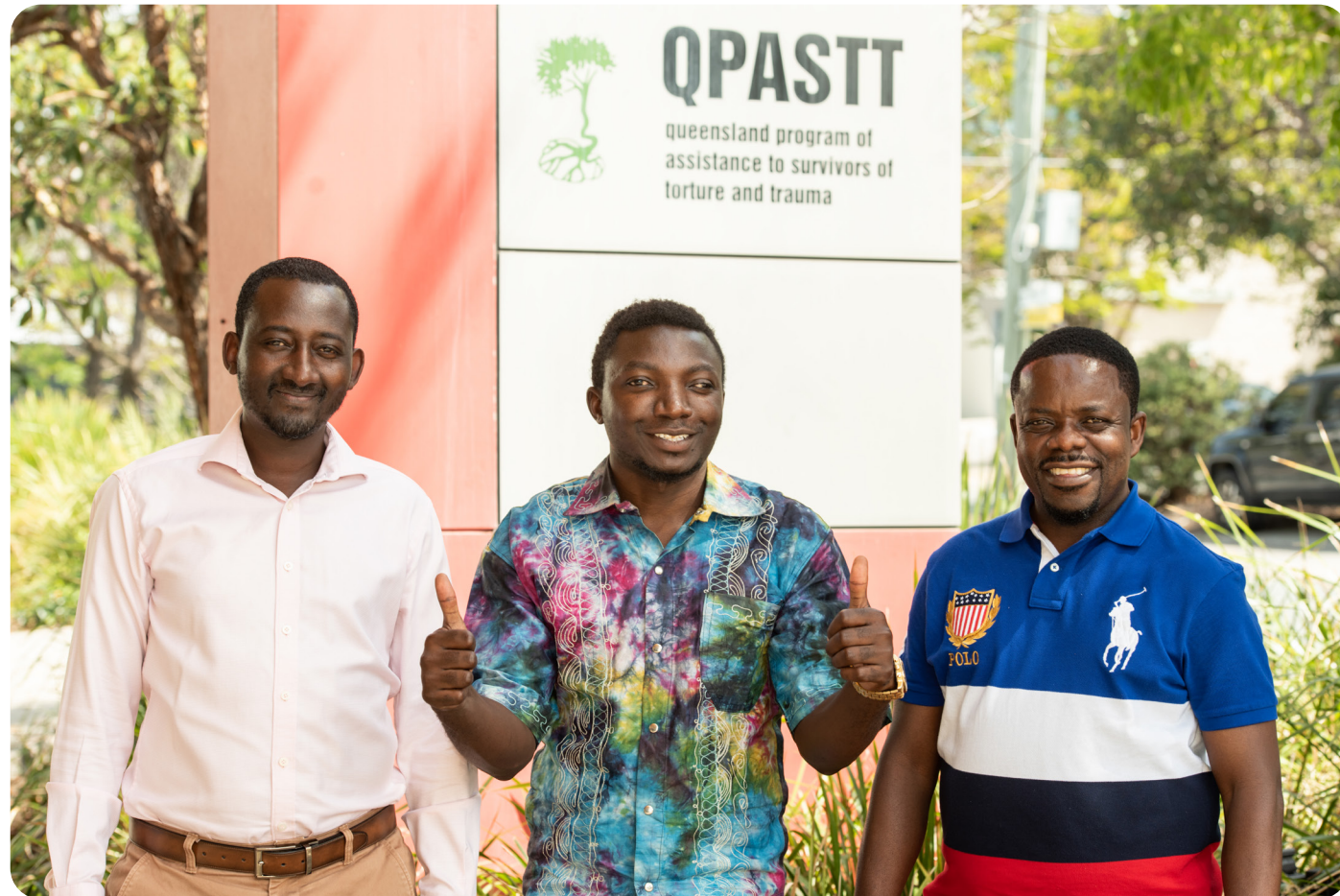
CALD Suicide Prevention Training Project

Since 2019, QPASTT has been a member of the Steering Committee for CALD Suicide Prevention training project, a state-wide project supported by the Queensland Mental Health Commission and led by the Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre.

The project aims to build the capability of human services workers to recognise and support culturally diverse individuals who are experiencing suicidal ideation or behaviour, and build the capacity of culturally diverse media outlets to safely portray suicide in local media.

QPASTT provided advice and guidance to the development of the training package, and facilitated consultation with young people with a lived experience of suicidality or care of loved one. This work was concluded in June 2021 with the launch of the free online training.

[Access the training here.](#)



Sector Development

In 2021, QPASTT delivered 48 education and training sessions to 1,477 participants from a variety of organisations.

These sessions aimed at improving the sector's capacity to be refugee trauma informed. In the first half of 2021, there was a specific focus on sector development in regional areas including Toowoomba, Townsville and Cairns.

Additionally, eight guest lectures were delivered at several Queensland universities focusing on the health, wellbeing and human rights of people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.

All QPASTT education and training sessions are evaluated using a brief pre and post-session questionnaire. The average session rating provided by training participants was 4.6/5.

Participants' key learnings and feedback about the training sessions included:

"ADOPTING THE CULTURAL FORMULATION MODEL WHEN WORKING WITH CLIENTS - THE DISCUSSIONS HELPED ME TO BE MORE AWARE OF CERTAIN CULTURAL DESCRIPTIONS OF CLIENTS' PROBLEMS."

"VERY CLEAR EXPLANATIONS WITH GREAT EXAMPLES THAT ALLOWED ME TO UNDERSTAND CONCEPTS AND FRAMEWORKS."

"BE MORE AWARE OF A CLIENT'S DESCRIPTION OF A PROBLEM FROM A CULTURAL CONTEXT. TRY TO ASK QUESTIONS OF WHAT IS CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE IF I AM UNSURE."

"AVOID USING CHILDREN AS INTERPRETERS."

"PHOTO EXERCISE WAS FANTASTIC (PICTURE THESE CARDS - MEANING AND IMPACT OF THE WORK)."

"RECOGNISING TRAUMA SYMPTOMS AND PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO MANAGE THEM. WHY - TO HELP ACHIEVE POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR CLIENTS."

"I WILL BE THINKING ABOUT WINDOW OF AROUSAL, HOW TO LISTEN AND SUPPORT CLIENTS."

"LEARNING TO SET BOUNDARIES WITH CLIENTS/ YOU ARE NOT A HERO. SUPPORTING THEM INSTEAD OF DOING EVERYTHING FOR THEM."

Our Organisation

Just as we build community with our clients, we foster community with our staff, with a commitment to listening to staff voices and nurturing a healthy culture where we live our values of kindness, optimism, perseverance, fairness and honesty.

QPASTT is a team of over 114 staff from 46 different ethnicities, speaking 32 languages. We are committed to diversity within our organisation and representing the lived experience of refugee survivors through our staff and board.

Our Commitment to Quality Practice and Development

Professional Supervision and Development

QPASTT's professional supervision team provides clinical supervision to QPASTT staff ensuring that our clients receive safe and high-quality services to support their trauma recovery, and that our staff are supported in their practice and wellbeing, including managing the risks of vicarious trauma.

In 2021, the Professional Supervision Team supported 68 direct practice staff through supervision as well as inducting 27 new staff into QPASTT's trauma practice frameworks, including observing direct practice, ensuring our staff are offering consistent and quality engagement with clients in line with trauma-informed frameworks

The Professional Supervision Team delivered 53 hours of training to internal staff and external services across Greater Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville, covering topics including working with complex trauma; telehealth and working online therapeutically; vicarious trauma, burnout and self-care; internal database management; working with children and young people; youth work; responding to difficult situations; supporting asylum seeker work

QPASTT also provides clinical supervision to counselling staff at our FASSTT sister agency Phoenix House in Tasmania, offering external supervision by practitioners working within the FASSTT trauma recovery framework and recovery goals.

Expanding our expertise across therapeutic modalities

QPASTT is committed to expanding our therapeutic expertise and practice to be able to offer our clients and communities a range of interventions to support their trauma-recovery. QPASTT's Advanced Practitioners Erica Fernandez and Kathleen McBride have led the delivery of internal practice development and training in somatic interventions and Narrative Exposure Therapy for QPASTT counsellors.

Read more about these therapeutic modalities and how they can benefit survivors of torture and trauma here on pages 32-33 of [*Healing, Belonging, Thriving, Justice: celebrating 25 years of QPASTT.*](#)



QPASTT's Rainbow Working Group

QPASTT is committed to creating a safe, inclusive and equitable environment for people from all genders, sexualities, religions and cultures – for our clients, communities and our staff.

To build on this commitment, we have established the Rainbow Working Group, an internal staff group exploring how we can make our services more welcoming and inclusive for people of diverse sexual and gender identities and how we can collaborate with allied services and cultural communities to address the needs of people who identify as LGBTQ+.

QPASTT has been approached to auspice and support a community-led peer support project for people who identify as LGBTQ+ and will be commencing this work in 2022.



HEAL Founder Jane Griffin and Art Therapist Bethany Mahadeo

Joining with HEAL

In July 2021, QPASTT took on the delivery of the HEAL expressive arts therapy programs from the Friends of HEAL Foundation (FHEAL).

HEAL was established in 2004 as a school-based specialty mental health program supporting the wellbeing of young people from refugee backgrounds in Milpera State High School. Today, HEAL provides expressive therapies to students across four Brisbane secondary schools and to Queensland's diverse cultural communities, funded by private philanthropy and by fee-for-service.

HEAL and QPASTT have a longstanding relationship and a shared purpose to nurture meaningful futures by assisting people from refugee backgrounds to heal, belong and thrive in our community. QPASTT continues to work closely with HEAL founder Jane Griffin, former Chair Adele Rice AM and the HEAL community of staff and supporters to increase the impact of HEAL programs by expanding into more schools and offering HEAL programs to Queensland's diverse cultural communities.

Celebrating 25 Years of QPASTT

In 2021, QPASTT celebrated 25 years since our incorporation in 1996. To mark this milestone, we launched a refreshed logo and website, as well as a document *Healing, Belonging, Thriving, Justice: celebrating 25 years of QPASTT* to tell the stories of our work and community over the last quarter of a century.

We interviewed over 60 members of the QPASTT community, including founders, current and previous staff and Board members, clients and community members to hear their stories and reflections on QPASTT's history, our services, our culture and purpose. Their common reflection was of the respect, kindness and safety that characterises QPASTT's approach to our work and our relationships with our community.

[Read *Healing, Belonging, Thriving, Justice: celebrating 25 years of QPASTT*](#)

[Explore QPASTT's new website.](#)



Our Commitment to Continuity of Service

QPASTT has continued to support clients and staff through the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Part of this has been the continued implementation of our IT upgrade strategy, which will alleviate our reliance on on-site resources at our offices and move our critical services into the cloud, enabling QPASTT staff to work efficiently from anywhere and meeting robust disaster resilience levels.

We have also upgraded our remote server system and upgraded our IT hardware across all our offices.

Refreshing the QPASTT Logo



Our 25-year celebration was an appropriate occasion to refresh our logo and brand for the first time, retaining QPASTT's history while looking to the future.

The refreshed QPASTT logo incorporates our well-known tree motif and portrays the recovery process from torture and trauma.

The roots overlapping each other represent being restricted and the hardships that survivors have experienced before, and sometimes after, migration.

The untangling and stabilisation of the roots enable a healthy tree to thrive, symbolising the process of healing for individuals, families and communities.

The branches of the tree are reaching out to each other, representing that connection with others and belonging are important for healing.

The varying colour throughout the trunks and branches signifies that recovery is a journey of growth and transformation that can be difficult at times but often culminates with 'flowering' again in the new environment.

The birds at the ends of the branches symbolise justice and our vision that survivors can live lives liberated from the harms of torture, trauma and human rights injustices.

The birds reflect the colours of a new dawn and are symbolic of opportunity and survivors' hopes that current and future generations will thrive in Australia



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