



IMPACT **2021** REPORT **2022**



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.



QPASTT's Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland, launches QPASTT's refreshed brand, together with Jamila Padhee (QPASTT Co-CEO) and Professor Emeritus Keithia Wilson (QPASTT Chair), December 2021.

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.

PERSEVERANCE

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

It is my pleasure to present the 2021/2022 QPASTT Impact Report.

This year was somewhat of a return to 'business-as-usual' as Australia's border opened, COVID-19 lockdowns ceased and face-to-face services returned where possible within public health restrictions.

Our investment in upgrading QPASTT's ICT infrastructure over the past two years has ensured we have a mobile and flexible workforce who can adapt to the challenges presented by ongoing waves of COVID-19 and natural disasters, like the floods that once more inundated large parts of Queensland this year. QPASTT staff, newly equipped with upgraded laptops, enhanced data security measures and transitioning to a cloud-based server are able to support clients remotely and securely, from anywhere at any time.

With Australia's border gradually reopening from November 2021, 1,455 people arrived in Queensland under the Humanitarian Settlement Program, compared to 240 people arriving in 2020/2021. 41% of arrivals were those fleeing the crisis in Afghanistan and 15% were people fleeing the war in Ukraine. QPASTT supported 528 new Afghan arrivals to Queensland through our Afghan Response Team (read more about this on page 15). This year, we employed a Ukrainian Community Connector to support our work with individuals and families who have escaped Ukraine, as well as the local Ukrainian community in Australia.

Demand for QPASTT's services continues to be above pre-COVID levels, despite still lower than usual arrivals. In 2022, we supported 7,796 clients through both individual or family counselling and group work – a 17% increase since 2019. The Board recognises the extraordinary determination of our staff who continue to respond to the needs of our service users and communities, supporting them on their healing journey even while pandemic and natural disasters affect their own households and local communities.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to congratulate our CEO Jamila Padhee for her superb leadership, steering QPASTT through ongoing disruption, charting a course guided by our values of kindness, optimism, perseverance, fairness and honesty.

QPASTT's culture is nurtured daily through the service of our dedicated staff. The Board recognises their efforts and achievements supporting our service users and communities to heal, belong and thrive. We are grateful for the values-driven leadership provided by our Senior Leaders (Liz Gordon, Amy Burkett, Fernanda Torresi, Vickie Pastellas, Angela Ng and Niyati Acharya) and our Team Leaders (Elham Rezaei, Farah Suleman, Jo-Ann Cochran, Eli Moore, Katie Artiss, Meredith Hands, Kani Kenyi, Naomi Brown, Natalie Youssef, Noemie Rigaud, Ruth Power, Susannah Tipping, Vedrana Jovic, Meriam Aman, and Stephanie Long) across the organisation in 2021/2022.

I would like to thank and acknowledge the contributions of my colleagues on the Board who continue to volunteer their time and expertise as committed stewards of QPASTT's vision (Robin Lonergan, Dr Ian Mannion, Dr Pam Douglas, Raziq Qasimi, and Fraser Power). This year, we were also delighted to welcome our former Co-CEO Dr Ignacio Correa-Velez, as well as Adele Rice AM and Kerrin Benson AM as Directors. Their experience in settlement, education, research and advocacy and mental health is immense, as is their commitment to our purpose in the refugee sector, and the thriving futures we can nurture in partnership with refugee and cultural communities, government and other stakeholders.

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 achieve that through the continued guidance and partnership of community leaders and members.

Professor Emeritus Keithia Wilson
Chair



L-R: Sally Stewart, Liz Gordon, Jamila Padhee and Professor Emeritus Keithia Wilson (Chair of QPASTT).

Changes to QPASTT's Executive Leadership

In October 2022, QPASTT's CEO Jamila Padhee resigned for personal reasons. Liz Gordon and Sally Stewart have been appointed as Co-CEOs. Liz Gordon will assume the role of Co-CEO of Practice Leadership and Service Delivery and Sally Stewart will take on the role of Co-CEO of Partnerships and Opportunity Development.

Jamila has led QPASTT as Co-CEO since 2019 and as CEO since November 2021. Both professionally and personally, Jamila has demonstrated a deep commitment to creating a positive multicultural society where refugees are welcomed and supported, and we know that she will remain a key member of our QPASTT community.

Both Liz and Sally are strong leaders with extensive experience in leadership roles at QPASTT and are aligned with QPASTT's values. We are pleased that Jamila will have a continued role in mentoring Liz and Sally in their roles as Co-CEOs.

A MESSAGE FROM JAMILA

QPASTT is truly a remarkable organisation. I have valued being able to contribute to its impact for the past four years.

I am really proud of what I have been able to achieve in partnership with our incredible staff, with our Board of Directors and our sector and community leader partners. Working together we have ensured that our foundational values of dignity, human rights, and community-led practice have been embedded through our service with clients and communities. I am proud that when others talk about QPASTT, they say that we are a listening organisation who cares.

I will miss the opportunity to continue to shape QPASTT as CEO. But our purpose, our partnerships and the people and communities we support remain so important to me and I look forward to continuing to support QPASTT's vision into the future in different ways.

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Members of QPASTT's Women's Skillshare Group shared reflections of what the group means for them. See their story on page 20.

CEO's Report

The core focus of QPASTT's work is the integration of mental health interventions together with a broader promotion of wellbeing that supports flourishing adults, young people, families and communities.

In 2021/2022 QPASTT experienced a 37% increase in referrals to our individual and family support services, including counselling, compared to pre-COVID levels. Almost 43% of our clients have been resident in Australia for greater than five years, demonstrating that trauma-recovery services are often sought out by those later in their settlement journey.

Culture and community-based healing and connectedness is the foundation of our approach to wellbeing. 5,645 people participated in QPASTT social, therapeutic and wellbeing groups, events and activities, co-designed with community members to meet their needs.

Intergenerational healing for children, young people and families continues to be a priority. We have seen an increase in referrals of very young children (aged 0-4) and worryingly, an increasing proportion of young people are reporting suicide ideation. We are expanding our youth work across Townsville and Cairns, recruiting child, youth and family-focused counsellors as well as youth workers with lived refugee experience. Our Youth Voice leadership program in Townsville, established last year, has secured additional funding and continues to grow, providing a platform for young people to advocate for social change on the issues affecting their lives.

There can be no healing without justice, through improving equity of outcomes for social and economic inclusion for survivors or refugee trauma. Despite ongoing disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic, we trained 1,506 people from a range of service providers to be trauma-informed. QPASTT staff and clients participated in consultations with state and federal bodies on a range of issues, including mental health, education and human rights.

Our community leader partners continue to champion mental health and wellbeing, which is so important to reduce the stigma that exists across all our communities and I thank them for their insights which continue to shape our programs and services.

I am proud to lead a dedicated and diverse staff group. 61% of our 111 staff are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and 29% have lived refugee experience. All of them are committed to our vision and demonstrate our values every day.

I would like to thank the QPASTT Board, staff, volunteers and supporters and all of our government, community and sector partners for working with us to achieve our vision of a world where people can live their lives liberated from the harms of torture, trauma and human rights injustice.

Jamila Padhee
CEO



RIGHT: Jamila Padhee (QPASTT CEO) with Fernanda Torresi (QPASTT Senior Leader for Group and Community-based Recovery), Dr Habib Jamal, Galila Abdelsalam OAM and Robert Mukombozi (QPASTT Community Development Officer) at the 2021 Multicultural Queensland Awards.

CFO's Report

The 2022 financial year was one of change for QPASTT, with significant demand for our services across all our regions, and increasing operating costs.

QPASTT's total revenue increased to \$9.7 million in FY22 (FY21 - \$8.6 million). This represents an increase of 12.7%.

QPASTT received additional funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health through the PASTT program to support newly arrived evacuees from Afghanistan. We also received additional grant resources through the Department of Home Affairs (Safer Communities funding), Queensland Health and the Brisbane South Primary Health Network. The increase in revenue is the combination of recognition of growing client need as well as the quality work our staff have demonstrated in service delivery with our clients.

Despite an increase in revenue, the 2021/2022 financial year was challenging for QPASTT. The agency continued to experience significant client-related demand for our services across all regions. This was in a context of increasing operating costs as well as increases in wages, portable long-service leave and compulsory superannuation. It was also necessary to continue the upgrade of our IT infrastructure. As a result, the agency experienced a full-year deficit of \$473,000.

Salaries and wages continue to be the biggest expenses for QPASTT, totalling \$8.4 million, or 87% of total revenue. It includes salaries and wages, leave provision and superannuation, as well as continued professional development and training. As a result of ongoing IT modernisation and fleet renewal, depreciation expenses continue to be high at \$325,000. QPASTT expects human resources expenses to continue to grow in line with revenue and award requirements, but depreciation expenses should slowly reduce over the next two years.

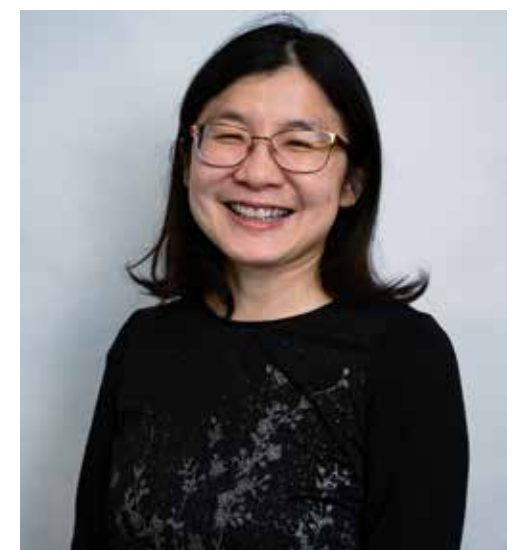
The pressure of anticipated increases in staff wages and superannuation costs in FY23 prompted QPASTT to make the very difficult decision to instigate a voluntary redundancy process in the second half of the financial year. The total cost of redundancies including leave entitlement payouts was \$152,000.

QPASTT continues to maintain its healthy asset and liabilities ratio. The current ratio of 2.6 indicates QPASTT's high level of liquidity and the ability to settle all its short term obligations.

Our 2021/2022 audited financial statements were prepared by our auditors, Haywards Chartered Accountants, and are in compliance 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 journeys.

Angela Ng
Chief Financial Officer



Key Figures

IN 2021/2022...

QPASTT supported **7,796** people from **85** countries of origin.



We supported **2,151** individuals with direct counselling, across **15,110** sessions
(an increase of **31.5%**)

TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF COUNSELLING CLIENTS:

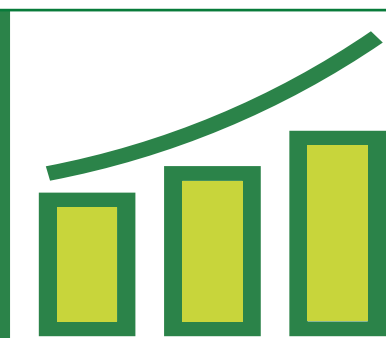
- Afghanistan
- Iraq
- Iran
- Congo (Democratic Republic)
- Syria
- South Sudan
- Australia
- Sri Lanka
- Burma (Republic of the Union of Myanmar)
- Eritrea



5,645 people participated in QPASTT groups, events and activities



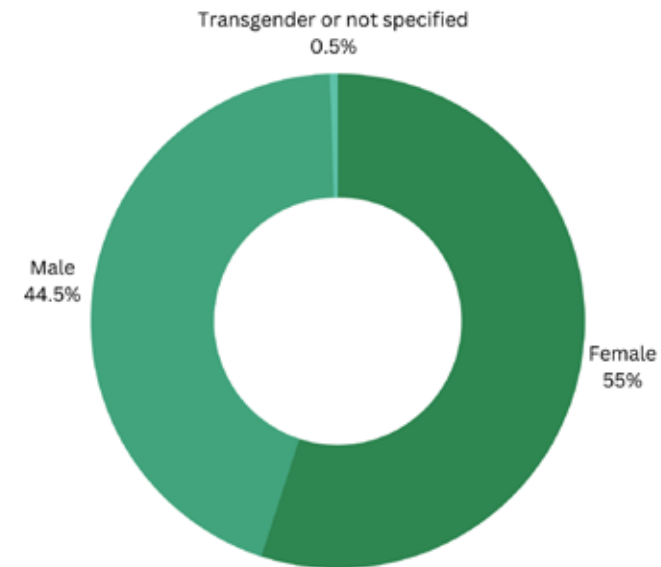
Over 40% of our counselling clients were 25 years and under



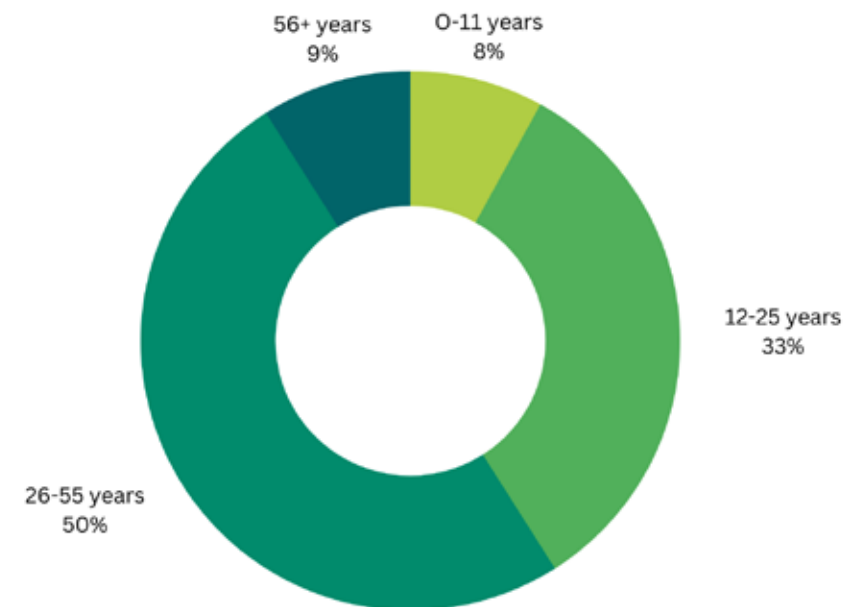
We received **1,969** new referrals
(an increase of **49%**)

We supported **218** people seeking asylum

Gender breakdown of counselling clients:



Age breakdown of counselling clients:



QPASTT had **111** staff members from **40+ countries**, speaking **30 languages**

61% of our staff are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and **29%** have lived refugee experience

We trained 1,506 people over 65 sessions to be trauma-informed and better able to support refugees.

On average, participants rated our training sessions 4.7/5



We grew our community of supporters on social media by

55%

Wellbeing First

In 1995, QPASTT was founded as an alternative to medical models of mental health intervention, instead focusing on community-led interventions and an approach to health that views wellbeing and recovery as inextricably linked to social, economic, and environmental factors, including the upholding of human rights. That focus informs QPASTT's strategic pillars:

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.



QPASTT is a member of the Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH) – the peak body for community mental health and wellbeing organisations in Queensland, representing more than 100 organisations.

In July 2021, the QAMH launched Wellbeing First, a report that highlights the need for mental health reform to alleviate the pressure on acute mental health services and to drive a holistic and community-based approach to mental health and wellbeing. QPASTT is pleased to see the community-based approaches that drove our establishment in 1995 now at the fore of conversations about mental health service delivery.



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

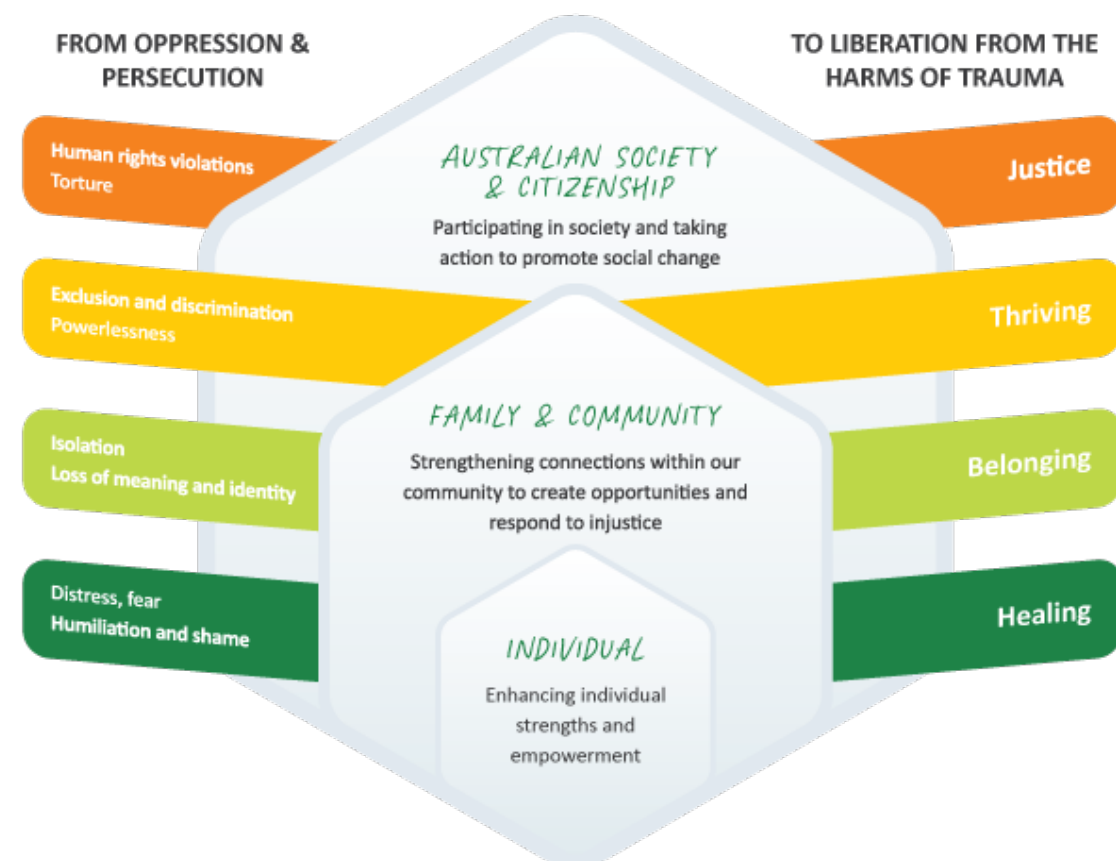
In 2021/2022, QPASTT Counsellor/Advocates supported 2,151 clients over 15,110 counselling sessions.

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



REDUCING OUR WAITLIST FOR CLIENTS - EMBEDDING OUR INTAKE AND CONNECT MODEL

In 2021/2022, QPASTT continued to embed a new intake and assessment process for referrals into our service.

Whereas before, people would have to wait until a counsellor became available before being supported by QPASTT, our Intake and Connect team (established in April 2021) focuses on contacting all referrals into QPASTT and providing brief or short-term interventions to meet their immediate needs.

50% of referrals into QPASTT are now able to be closed at the point of intake and brief intervention and do not require ongoing counselling. This intake model not only reduced our overall waitlist for people who need to access a counsellor, but we were also able to provide a needs assessment at the point of referral. For vulnerable clients, this enables us to provide them with interim support while they wait to access counselling, either through short term mental health interventions (like help with coping strategies), group work or referral to external services.

Advocating for the needs and rights of people who are referred to QPASTT is a key aspect of our Intake and Connect model. Many people referred to us are reporting a decrease in their mental wellbeing due to external factors including housing instability, financial insecurity, sex or gender discrimination, legal issues and barriers to accessing citizenship and mainstream services like the NDIS. Following advocacy from QPASTT's Intake and Connect team, most people referred reported an improvement in their mental health and did not require a referral to ongoing counselling. For others, our advocacy helped them to reduce their daily stressors and enabled them to focus on their counselling needs and goals. Everyone with a refugee or refugee-like background can access QPASTT's services, with no limits to eligibility based on visa type, status or length of time in Australia, which means QPASTT can assist people who have missed out on or are no longer eligible for settlement support.

In 2021/2022 the median days on QPASTT's waitlist reduced by 68% and the number of clients on our waitlist reduced by over 50%.

RIGHT: Fahima Ahmadi and QPASTT Board Director Razia Qasimi were MCs at our Afghan Welcome Event. They said: "WE ARE HERE TODAY TO WELCOME YOU TO YOUR NEW COUNTRY, WE ARE HERE TO WELCOME YOU FOR A FRESH START, A LIFE AWAY FROM WAR, DESTRUCTION, FEAR AND TURMOIL. A LIFE WHERE YOU CAN FIND PEACE, HOPE, COUNTLESS OPPORTUNITIES AND A PLACE WHERE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU BELONG. SO WELCOME TO AUSTRALIA AND TO YOUR NEW HOME."

AFGHAN EVACUEE RESPONSE

After the capture of Kabul by the Taliban in August 2021, Australia received over 4,000 people fleeing the crisis. QPASTT established an Afghan Response Team to provide culturally appropriate, trauma-informed support for the individuals and families who sought safety. In the team were four Community Connectors, a Trauma Recovery Practitioner and a Team Leader. QPASTT has supported over 528 people evacuated from Afghanistan.

Our Afghan Response Team model is an example of community-led healing. Our Community Connectors were our front-line practitioners, meeting clients in their homes and at culture-based groups and events and conducting culturally-informed assessments of the needs of individuals and families. Our Community Connectors then met with counselling practitioners from our Intake team to talk through the most appropriate ways for QPASTT to meet clients' needs. Where counselling was required or complex mental health needs were identified, clients were referred into our intake process, but what the Afghan arrivals we supported found most helpful was being welcomed and supported by their own cultural community. QPASTT brought new arrivals together with members of the local Afghan community to celebrate special cultural events including Nowruz and Eid as well as a special welcome event supported by the Queensland Mental Health Commission, featuring Afghan speakers, music, performers, and food. People said they "hadn't laughed until that night (of these events)," and in many instances were moved to tears at the welcome they received from their local community.



Supporting People Seeking Asylum

In 2021/22, QPASTT supported 218 people seeking asylum with counselling and trauma-specialist mental health support.

This year marked our 22nd year supporting people seeking asylum in the community or in held detention. Some of our clients have been in held detention for a decade. Others, though living in the community, have faced a decade of visa uncertainty and challenges accessing services available to those on permanent visas, including housing, employment, medical treatment and tertiary education.

There are significant personal and financial consequences of Australia's asylum seeker policies, including self-harming, addiction and suicides. Both the held and community detention environments can be retraumatising and sources of new trauma for people. Suicide ideation for clients engaged in our Asylum Seeker Mental Health Connect program is over 30%.

QPASTT counselling can provide a space for people to talk about their distress and develop skills and techniques to cope, including normalising the feelings they are experiencing, supporting them to maintain physical health, providing psychoeducation about the impacts of trauma, linking clients to services they might be entitled to, and helping them to establish social connections and supports.

In addition to direct client work, QPASTT's counsellors provide reports to lawyers documenting the significant negative mental health impacts people seeking asylum have endured after years of detention and visa uncertainty.

Scattered People Fundraiser

In July 2021, QPASTT co-hosted a film screening of *Scattered People* World Wellness Group to raise funds for their Asylum Healthcare Fund, which provides access to essential medical care, nursing and medication support and health advocacy for people seeking asylum living in the community.

Through the eyes and hearts of two Iranian musicians, *Scattered People* is a story about the healing power of music, bringing together people, cultures and countries while exploring Australian attitudes towards people seeking asylum.

Followed by a panel discussion featuring producers John and Lizzi Swatland, cast member Brian Procopis, and World Wellness Group Managing Director Rita Prasad-Ildes, the film screening raised \$4,325 for the Asylum Healthcare Fund.

Asylum Seeker Mental Health Connect

A partnership between QPASTT and World Wellness Group, the Asylum Seeker Mental Health Connect program is 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.

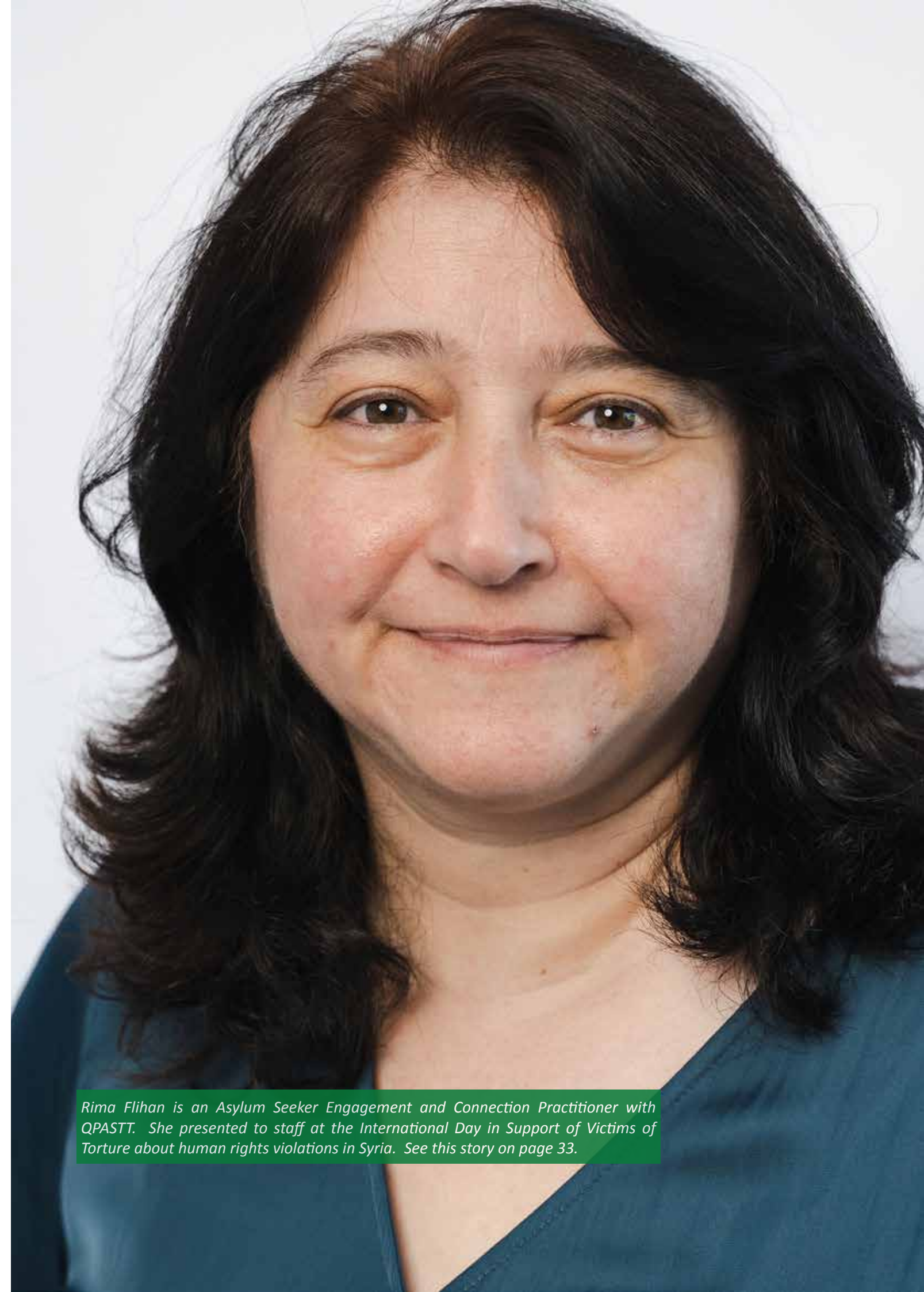
Funded by the Queensland Department of Health, the team delivers services in outreach locations and via telehealth to provide state-wide access. The program has enabled us to respond to referrals within two weeks and reduce the waiting list for long-term counselling.

In 2021/2022:

- 128 clients were provided individual support over 1,570 session hours
- 59 clients participated in wellbeing groups
- 17% of clients in this program were less than 25 years of age



ABOVE: World Wellness Group Managing Director Rita Prasad-Ildes speaks at our Scattered People Film Screening.



Rima Flihan is an Asylum Seeker Engagement and Connection Practitioner with QPASTT. She presented to staff at the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture about human rights violations in Syria. See this story on page 33.

Building Belonging

A sense of safety is fundamental for healing. Without belonging, people do not feel safe. 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 and 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 2021/2022, QPASTT delivered group sessions to 4,691 participants.

Third Queer Culture LGBTIQ+ Peer Group

QPASTT is auspicing Third Queer Culture, a Queensland-based support group for LGBTIQ+ refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia. We are working closely with Peer Leaders Tiko and Elfaz as they establish the group as a pilot project, with funding from the Pride Foundation Australia.

Since establishing in March 2022, the group has grown to 10 members through word of mouth alone, demonstrating a need and interest in such a support group.

Group members say the value of Third Queer Culture is the opportunity to build support networks of people who have the unique (and often isolating) experience of seeking safety in Australia because of their LGBTIQ+ identity.

Third Queer Culture is exploring advocacy projects, further promotion and funding beyond the pilot end date of September 2022.

"WHAT THIRD QUEER CULTURE IS TRYING TO PROVIDE IS THIS BELONGING WHERE PEOPLE CAN DEVELOP THEIR OWN UNDERSTANDING AND WAYS OF BEING QUEER WITHOUT HAVING TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THEIR ETHNIC-BASED CULTURE OR THEIR SEXUAL AND GENDER IDENTITIES." – Tiko, Peer Leader at Third Queer Culture

Hear Tiko and Elfaz talk about Third Queer Culture at <https://youtu.be/xBpu2dAU87Y>



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 TOWNSVILLE...

Central African Republic Women's Group

Staff identified specific needs of women from the Central African Republic in relation to their wellbeing within Australia.

QPASTT created a fortnightly group, where the women would come together to discuss different topics that they wished to share. In the process of the group, the facilitators identified settlement issues, mainly around safety concerns and housing issues. The facilitators were able to provide tailored workshops to meet the needs of the women who attended the workshops.

Guest speakers included North QLD Women's Legal Service and QSTARS to support understanding of tenancy rights. The women felt more empowered and educated on their rights, which enabled them to advocate for themselves based on their needs.

Afghan Women's Group

Townsville TAFE approached QPASTT to discuss the need to create a group to support women affected by the crisis in Afghanistan. Supported by QPASTT facilitators, five Afghan women (pictured below) met fortnightly, forming strong friendships that provided emotional support and connection. The women were also connected to the Women's Legal Service to obtain legal support for assistance with applying for protection visas.



IN TOOWOOMBA...

QPASTT partnered with Multicultural Australia to run a men's wellbeing group in Toowoomba, providing opportunities for participants, primarily from the Êzidî community, to build social connections while supporting their mental health.

Along with fun-focused activities including fishing (pictured above), soccer and BBQs, each group meeting included a brief psychoeducation session on topics relevant to participants' lives, including mindfulness and self care.

Group sessions can be very effective in achieving healing for survivors because they focus on building trust and belonging to counter the loneliness and stigma that can result from experiencing trauma.

Supporting Communities of Belonging

CONTINUED

Women’s Skillshare Groups

QPASTT has developed three Women’s Skillshare Groups in Logan, Brisbane North and Moorooka, as well as a new ‘Seedling’ group for women newly arrived from Afghanistan.

The groups provide meaningful opportunities for participants to share their skills with others and to learn new skills, while also offering an environment for women to build new connections and social links.

The groups are a safe space for women, regardless of their language, faith, ethnicity and cultural background.

Participants have consistently shared that the groups give them a sense of recognition. They feel “seen” and “heard” at the groups and feel acknowledged for who they are with no strings attached. They report that the women’s groups have helped them to escape feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Throughout 2021/2022, the women provided recipes for a cookbook *How to Cook Hope: celebrating culture, connection and community through cooking*, which will be launched in 2023.

In 2021/2022, we conducted an internal evaluation of the Logan and Brisbane North Groups. Some of the women’s reflections are below:

"ATTENDING THE GROUP AND SEEING MY BEST FRIENDS AND FAMILY. MY KIDS ARE TEASING ME, SAYING, "MUM, EVEN YOU DON'T MAKE BREAKFAST FOR US, WHERE IS THIS SPECIAL PLACE THAT YOU GO EVERY WEEK." YES, I KEEP THIS DAY IN A WEEK FOR MY SELF CARE, TO HAVE A BREAK FROM EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE AND TO USE THE SPACE TO CONNECT WITH BEAUTIFUL LADIES, AND HELP EACH OTHER TO FEEL EMPOWERED."

"SINCE I AM ATTENDING THE WOMEN'S GROUP, IN THE PAST MORE THAN ONE YEAR, I MEET A NEW VERSION OF MYSELF EVERY WEEK. I FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF, I FEEL STRONG, I FEEL WORTHY. I FEEL THAT SOMETHING HAS BEEN CHANGED INSIDE OF ME. I DON'T FEEL LIKE AN EMPTY SHELL ANYMORE"



Disaster Management Preparedness Project

QPASTT and Multicultural Australia worked collaboratively with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community leaders and representatives to identify gaps in disaster preparedness and develop appropriate response strategies for multicultural communities.

Through this project, the leaders and representatives reflected on past disaster events and co-designed strategies to enable communities to prepare and respond to future events.

We also delivered co-training workshops for community leaders and representatives together with emergency service personnel to continue to build capacity and connection for these stakeholders to develop prevention, preparedness, response and recovery across a range of disaster scenarios, including workshops at the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Headquarters in Kedron.

This project was supported by the Queensland Government, through the Community Action for a Multicultural Society (CAMS) program of the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs.

La Balade Men’s Group Pilot

In collaboration with Community and World Wellness Group, QPASTT ran several wellbeing and connection sessions with men who are seeking asylum. The group’s aims were designed and established in consultation with the participants and partner organisations, focussing on the need to decrease social isolation, support the acculturation process and provide psychosocial supports.

Over a six month period, QPASTT workers engaged participants in individual conversations to identify their needs. The meetings highlighted high levels of anxiety, depression, hopelessness, helplessness and trauma requiring urgent support as prevalent issues for this cohort of men.

Although many participants were engaged in individual counselling, they identified other needs including social isolation, poor physical health, lack of support networks, and language barriers. In response, QPASTT has been able to provide complementary support through outdoor activities including lawn bowls, bush walking, fishing, and BBQ events. These activities helped to improve the men’s sense of health and wellbeing by reducing trauma symptoms of fear, sadness, shame and numbness. They have helped to increase the men’s ability to tolerate challenges, reduce their isolation, build their social networks and improve their general life skills.

Supporting Communities of Belonging

CONTINUED

Communities Healing to Thrive

Communities Healing to Thrive (CHT) is a trauma-informed, pro-social leadership program that uses expressive therapy modalities (art, music, drama, dance and play) to meet the unique intersect between the cultural, community, leadership and trauma and mental health needs of culturally and linguistically diverse and refugee background community leaders.

CHT is a community-led healing initiative, which means we do not prescribe or impose the program, rather we work in partnership with community members to identify their needs and the priorities and focus of this work. Our programs are tailored for, or co-designed with, our participants so they have significant input and control over the program design and delivery.

The priorities for many community leaders participating in CHT has been to:

- Enhance their own wellbeing and sustainability as leaders who have themselves had experience of refugee related traumatic events; and
- Build their capacity to respond to mental and emotional needs of community members by enhancing their understanding of the impact of trauma (pre-arrival and ongoing) on the mental and emotional health in CALD and refugee communities; building skills and tools to respond to community members and families needing emotional and mental health support; and sharing strategies and knowledge to care for themselves and others.

In addition to our workshops programs, CHT offers 1:1 support and service linking to natural, formal and emerging community leaders to support them in their leadership role, including:

- Emotional and mental health support related to managing impacts of trauma on themselves and families;
- Specialist support in relation to their role as community leaders responding to mental health issues in their communities;
- Providing content on topics relevant to their community-led initiatives and projects; and
- Providing specialist information on areas relevant to the support they provide community including collective trauma and community resilience, inter-generational trauma, using somatic strategies when managing trauma responses, and developing boundaries in meaningful and appropriate ways.

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2021/2022

- CHT delivered workshops to over 80 community leaders and representatives, including from the Burmese speaking, Cambodian, Burundian, Tigray, South Sudanese, Kenyan, Syrian, Somali, New Zealander and Muslim faith communities.
- CHT also developed a resource package for community leaders who have participated in CHT workshops, to support their ongoing work with community.
- CHT supported a range of service providers to understand and apply community-led healing principles and best practice, including: Mater Refugee Health, Ethni, Brisbane South Primary Health Network, World Wellness Group, Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre, Inala TAFE EALT Unit and Harmony Place.
- 40.6% of our CHT participants were youth leaders (<25 years) and 42.5% of our CHT workshop participants were male.
- Over 95% of surveyed participants reported very high levels of satisfaction with how QPASTT welcomed them and provided culturally-safe and responsive initiatives.
- Over 95% of surveyed participants reported that CHT initiatives had enhanced their understanding of the impact of stress and trauma on themselves and their communities, and how they could respond.



Participant Feedback

"WE GO TO THE MOSQUE CLASS EVERY SUNDAY TO STUDY THE QURAN AND WE USED TO JUST GO STRAIGHT HOME. BUT AFTER THE SESSION ON MENTAL WELLBEING WHERE WE WERE ENCOURAGED TO SHARE OUR FEELINGS AND DIFFICULTIES WITH EACH OTHER, THESE DAYS AFTER OUR SESSION WE SIT AND JUST TALK AND SHARE OUR STORIES. LAST WEEK WE JUST TALKED FOR TWO AND A HALF HOURS."

"PREVIOUSLY I WOULD NOT SHARE MY PROBLEMS OR FEELINGS WITH ANY OF MY PEERS, BUT AFTER THE WORKSHOPS I FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING TO EACH OTHER AND WE KNOW THAT THE DISCUSSION IS CONFIDENTIAL AND IT REALLY HELPS. THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEBODY WHO HAS SOME ADVICE AND WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER."

"WE HAVE CREATED A SUPPORT COMMUNITY WITH EACH OTHER BECAUSE OF THE WORKSHOPS, WITHOUT EVEN REALISING IT."

"THANK YOU SO MUCH, I KNEW WHAT I WANTED TO ACHIEVE, I ALWAYS WANTED TO DO THIS, IT'S SO IMPORTANT FOR MY COMMUNITY. BUT YOU SHOWED ME HOW STRONG I WAS, AND REALLY HELPED ME UNDERSTAND MY OWN POTENTIAL AND HOW TO KEEP GOING, I WOULDN'T BE HERE WITHOUT YOU."

"WE WENT TO A FUNERAL THE OTHER DAY, IT WAS A VERY SAD FUNERAL AND WE WERE ALL STANDING AROUND AFTERWARDS DRINKING TEA AND FEELING SAD, AND I HEARD THE WOMEN WHO HAD ATTENDED THE WORKSHOPS TALKING TO THE OTHER PEOPLE THERE. NORMALLY WE DON'T REALLY TALK ABOUT OUR MENTAL HEALTH, BUT THE WOMEN HAD THE HARD BALLS [HARD PLASTIC BALLS USED FOR SELF-MASSAGE AND SELF-CARE HANDED OUT AND DISCUSSED AS PART OF THE WORKSHOPS] IN THEIR HAND BAGS AND THEY TOOK THEM OUT AND WERE SHOWING THE OTHERS HOW TO USE IT TO RELEASE STRESS AND FEEL BETTER. THEY WERE SAYING - THIS FUNERAL IS A BIG ROCK FOR US, IT IS A BIG ROCK WE HAVE TO CARRY AND IT WILL BE HEAVY ON OUR MINDS AND HEARTS. [THIS IS LANGUAGE USED IN THE WORKSHOPS TO DISCUSS SENSITIVE TOPICS WITHOUT USING STIGMATISING WORDS SUCH AS "MENTAL HEALTH"] IT MADE ME SO HAPPY TO SEE THEM USING WHAT WE DID IN THE COMMUNITY."

Supporting Communities of Belonging

CONTINUED

Ucan2 and Support, Skill and Connect

Ucan2 and Support Skill and Connect group programs are an integrated approach to enhancing education, settlement and broader integration processes for young people aged 16 to 25, and adults aged over 25 years, from refugee backgrounds.

These programs have been designed to work within existing education programs and settings, specifically, 'on arrival' English language programs such as the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

The activities in both programs draw on migrant experiences and focus on building employability skills, psychosocial support, and the development of social connections.

In 2021/2022, one Support Skill and Connect and three Ucan2 group work programs were delivered at Southbank TAFE to 80 participants. Each participant completed an average of 40 hours of face to face group work sessions over nine weeks.

Each program provided increased knowledge on settlement issues and understanding of Australian society. There were guest speakers and collaborations with stakeholders to provide excursions, mock job interviews and employment opportunities. The programs have been supported by seven committed volunteers for the past two years. The volunteers have been a valuable part of supporting the students to connect with and increase their understanding of Australian culture and values.

Participants reported improvement in their mental health and understanding of social connection and wellness. Most participants reported experiencing marked improvements in their overall health and wellbeing.

Feedback was collected using a variety of formal and informal tools across the program. We used the World Health Organisation (WHO-5) Wellbeing Index and QPASTT Client Feedback Framework (Q-FE), asking a series of questions covering thematic areas of needs and expectations, satisfaction, impact and outcomes.

100% of respondents scored 4/5 and above for overall program satisfaction; 100% scored 5/5 for feeling respected and listened to by QPASTT staff and volunteers; and 90% scored 5/5 for being better able to deal with the issues that they had sought help for from QPASTT.

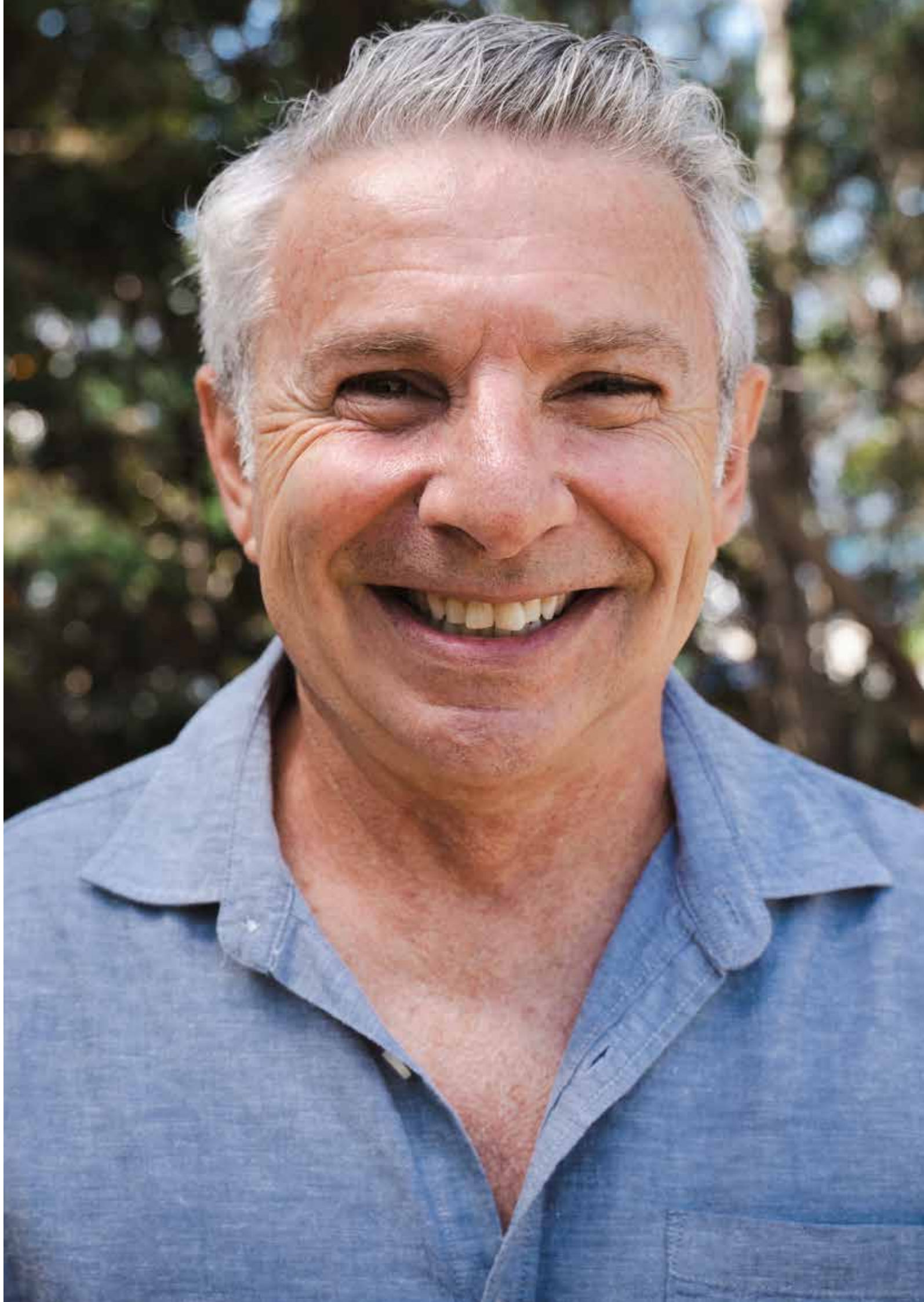
"I HAVE BEEN COMING TO TAFE EVERY TUESDAY BECAUSE I KNOW QPASTT WILL BE HERE AND I LEARN A LOT FROM YOU."

"THANK YOU FOR HELPING US TO HAVE A RESUME."

"I HOPE YOU WILL COME BACK AGAIN TO MY CLASSROOM NEXT TIME."

Ucan2 and Support, Skill and Connect participant feedback

RIGHT: QPASTT Volunteer Paul Mifsud supports new Queenslanders through our Support, Skill and Connect program.



Nurturing Thriving Futures

QPASTT focuses on improving the social and economic determinants of health so that individuals and families have fewer 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 2021/2022, QPASTT supported 370 children (<16 years) and 499 young people (16-25) through individual counselling, an increase of 49% and 11.6% from 2020/2021.

Building Stronger Families with Community Connectors

QPASTT used a Community Connector model to improve broader community awareness and knowledge about how trauma can impact on family members, their relationships with each other and overall family functioning.

Community Connectors are representatives of cultural communities, with strong links to community members.

QPASTT recruited ten Community Connectors from the Afghan, Burundi, Congolese, Ethiopian, Somali and South Sudanese communities and delivered a two-day training session covering topics including:

- QPASTT services available to the community
- Trauma informed practice, culture shock and culture conflict
- Introduction to the impact of trauma on the refugee and settlement experience
- Building stronger families (improving skills in managing family relationships in the Australian context)
- Human rights in Australia

Following the training, the Community Connectors organised workshops to share

knowledge and skills related to these topics with their communities and provided follow up support, like connecting community members to relevant services.

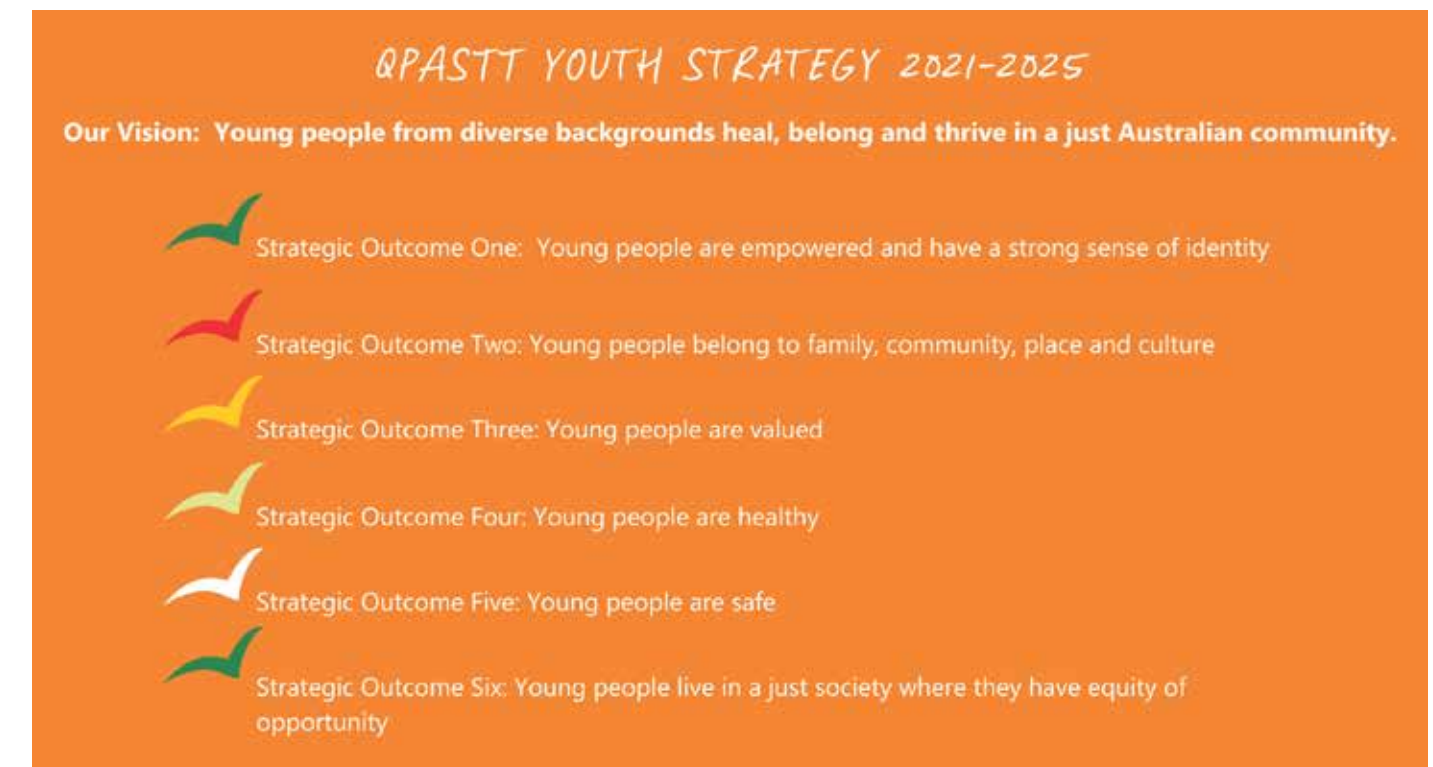
In Toowoomba, participants from the Sudanese community reported a better understanding about human rights and how to respond when they feel these are violated. Most of the mothers who participated, especially those with young children, said that they had started using chore charts discussed in the workshops and were finding this useful in parenting and home management.

Skilling up Community Connectors to deliver training and psychoeducation to their own cultural communities is one of the ways we support community-based healing and connection.



Supporting Young People

QPASTT's Youth Strategy 2021-2025 sets out the guiding principles of our youth programs, working towards a vision where all young people from diverse backgrounds heal, belong and thrive in a just Australian community. The strategic outcomes set out below inform our work with the next generation of Australians.



Strategic Outcome One - young people are empowered and have a strong sense of identity. They are valued and live in a just society where they have equity of opportunity:

YOUTH VOICE GOVERNMENT ROUNDTABLE

In August 2021, QPASTT, together with ACCESS Community Services and Multicultural Australia, supported our youth leadership groups to facilitate a Government Roundtable, including representatives from Multicultural Affairs Queensland, the Department of Home Affairs, the Australian Federal Police, and Logan City Council.

Young leaders from QPASTT's Youth Voice initiative worked with the Future Leaders Advocacy Group and Multicultural Youth Queensland, forming a youth working group and undertaking consultation with young people in Queensland revealing the key issues affecting their lives, including racism, exclusion, discrimination, mental health and employment.

At the Government Roundtable, youth leaders were able to share the experiences of young people with government representatives, express their vision of a positive future and participate in conversations about solutions and collaborative action that government and community members can work on to address injustice and inequality.

Many young leaders spoke to similar themes, sharing the everyday challenge of racism and the complexity of holding on to cultural identities that are often the target of ignorance and rejection in the wider Australian society.

"RACIAL DISCRIMINATION LEADS TO RACIAL HATE, A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE, WHICH IS A SCOURGE ON OUR SOCIETY, SLOWLY KILLING SOCIETY AND CREATING A DISPARATE EXISTENCE FOR SO MANY. LET'S CHOOSE INSTEAD TO BE PEACE BUILDERS."

"WHY I AM BEING PUNISHED BECAUSE OF SOME-ONE'S MISTAKE? WHY IS IT THAT EVERY TIME I'M BEING PRESENTED IN MEDIA THEY SEE LIKE I'M A THREAT? MY PARENT WON'T EVEN LET ME OUTSIDE JUST BECAUSE OF THE HATE AND THE NEGATIVES THAT GOES AROUND."

"LITTLE CHANGES CAN SOFTEN SOMEONE'S HEART. IT CAN HELP US BE BIGGER CONTRIBUTORS IN THE FUTURE. WE WANT OUR NEW AUSTRALIANS TO BELIEVE IN KINDNESS AND CHANGE. IT IS NOT ABOUT BECOMING WEALTHY AND HAVING MONEY AT A YOUNG AGE. IT IS ABOUT WHAT WE CAN RETURN TO THE COUNTRY THAT SAVED MOST OF US FROM AN UNTHINKABLE LIFE."

Youth Voice members, speaking at a 2021 Government Roundtable organised by QPASTT, ACCESS Community Services, and Multicultural Australia.



YOUTH CONSULTATIONS

In spite of ongoing COVID-19 interruptions, QPASTT was able to support young people to participate in a number of consultations including:

- The Queensland Human Rights Commission's Roundtable into the Review of Queensland's Discrimination Act
- Meeting with the Multicultural Affairs Queensland Advisory Council to provide youth perspectives on a range of issues
- The Department of Education's "Every Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Student Succeeding Plan"

YOUTH VOICE LEADERS DINNERS

In 2022, Youth Voice established Youth Leaders' Dinners to enable young leaders to meet, connect and exchange ideas about issues relevant to them. The Youth Leaders' Dinners are open to current and aspiring leaders of social, cultural and community youth groups across the Brisbane, Logan, Ipswich and surrounding areas and aim to:

- Create a youth-friendly platform in collaboration with youth leaders where they can meet, connect, discuss and exchange ideas about relevant issues.
- Facilitate the strengthening of relationships between services and youth leaders from multicultural backgrounds and among the leaders themselves.
- Provide leadership development opportunities and mentoring support for youth leaders.
- Support youth leadership to build a collective voice to jointly advocate at all levels of government about issues affecting their communities.

QPASTT supported Youth Voice members to plan and host the inaugural dinner, focusing on a discussion about how organisations can better support youth leaders. Young people at the dinner said they would like to see organisations:

- Give young people platforms to speak up about issues affecting them;
- Work with young people to explore innovative solutions; and
- Provide mentoring and training opportunities for young people to flourish as emerging leaders.

Strategic Outcome Two - young people belong to family, community, place and culture:

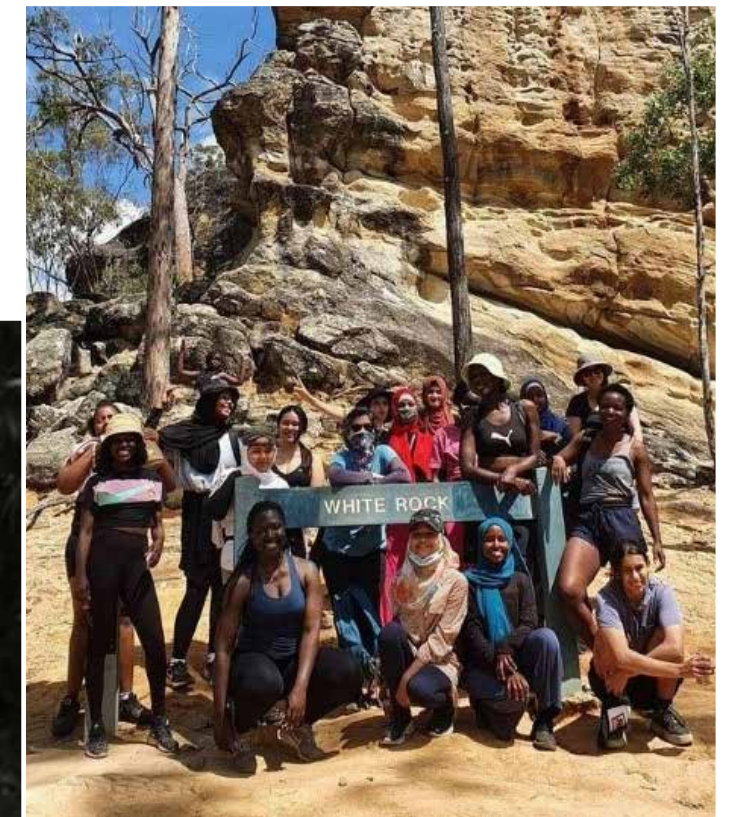
NEXT G PROGRAM

In 2021/2022, QPASTT established the Next G program in collaboration with the YMCA Ipswich. Next G facilitates the next generation of young people from diverse backgrounds (aged 12-25 years) to come together and create and participate in social activities, learn new skills, establish community connections, improve their wellbeing and build a sense of belonging.

A major activity of this fledgling program was the Next G camp in the June school holidays, where students from Ipswich State High School and Forest Lake State High School came together for three days of fun and adventure, trying their hand at canoeing, giant swings, indoor climbing, and building chariots and crates.

SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

Throughout 2021/2022, QPASTT has continued to host school holiday activities for young people, to enhance their social connection and inclusion, sense of belonging and trauma-recovery.



Strategic Outcome Four - young people are healthy and safe:

SAFE SISTERS WORKSHOPS AND FORUM

QPASTT supported Ethni to run a series of community workshops focusing on sexual health, safety, relationships and what it means to be an ally.

The Safe Sisters Forum was a culmination of these workshops and brought together 42 young women and elders from diverse cultural communities – creating a safe space to discuss sexual violence and its impact on individual and community wellbeing, safety, healing and recovery. The forum has established a network of support for women to share and explore trauma related to sexual violence and strategies for recovery.

As well as connecting with peers and elders, forum participants were able to connect with specialist services including Ethni, QPASTT, the Centre for Sexual Violence Inc., the Brisbane Rape and Incest Survivors Support Centre, and Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre.

99% of participants who provided feedback about the forum said the forum was "excellent" or "very good," and participants highlighted the value of sharing personal stories and experiences and ways to move forward.

Some reflections and feedback from forum participants:

"SPEAKING UP FOR OURSELVES AND THE POWER BEHIND SPEAKING UP."

"SPEAKING UP FOR OURSELVES IS IMPORTANT AND THE POWER OF SISTERHOOD."

"IT'S OK TO CRY AND NOT TO FEEL SHAME ABOUT IT."

"NAME IT. SPEAK IT."

"IT'S IMPORTANT TO CREATE A SAFE SPACE TO TALK ABOUT THE TOPIC THAT IS SO HARD TO TALK ABOUT."

"FEMALE SPACES ARE NECESSARY."

"I FELT VERY EMPOWERED BY THE WOMEN AROUND ME AND THEIR SHARES."

"THANK YOU SO MUCH - THERE IS STRENGTH IN NUMBERS AND WE NEED TO HEAR MORE FROM SURVIVORS."

"KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING, LISTEN TO OUR YOUNG WOMEN, SUPPORT THEM AND WATCH THEM GROW."

"THERE IS STRENGTH IN VULNERABILITY AND SISTERHOOD. HEALING IS BEST DONE TOGETHER. FACILITATING THESE IMPORTANT DISCUSSIONS IS AN INVESTMENT IN THE COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE HEALING."



Growing our work with regional youth

In response to community need, and in line with expanded settlement in North Queensland, this year QPASTT expanded our work with children and young people in Cairns and Townsville, including:

- Creating a child and youth-focused position in Townsville, addressing the need identified by services and the community to provide individual counselling for young people.
- Employing two Youth Workers with lived refugee experience in Townsville to create new youth and women-focused programs.
- Recruiting an Individual and Family Counsellor in Cairns.



YOUTH VOICE TOWNSVILLE

Following the establishment of Youth Voice in Townsville in 2021, a committee of 21 young people was formed to identify topical concerns, hear from guest speakers to present on those issues and then plan an event for young people.

Meeting weekly, the Townsville Youth Voice Committee organised an event focused on addressing the stigma of mental health and racism. Around 70 people attended the event, which featured speeches, dance, wellbeing and art workshops, food, stalls and music.

QPASTT established Youth Voice Townsville with initial funding from the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs in response to requests from community members and the service sector for more support for young people. Committee members report an increase in their confidence to identify and address social justice issues and many have increased their scores on the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index since finishing the program.

QPASTT has secured funding to deliver Youth Voice in Townsville for another year, with support from the Cybec Foundation.

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
- 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 2021/2022

- QPASTT and HEAL prepared a joint submission for the Department of Education's "Every Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Student Succeeding Plan" stakeholder consultation. The submission included a number of de-identified case studies based on client experience, together with the experiences of QPASTT child and youth counsellors and HEAL therapists supporting children, young people and their families at school. The submission highlighted significant investment in wellbeing for students from refugee backgrounds in Victoria and New South Wales, as well as resourcing to build the capacity of teachers and school staff to understand the impact of refugee trauma on students, and recommended similar approaches be initiated in Queensland.
- QPASTT prepared a submission to the Queensland Mental Health Select Committee Inquiry into Mental Health Outcomes, presenting a blueprint for change that encompasses collaboration between the specialist, mainstream and refugee communities to: develop and employ a bicultural lived experience workforce that can advocate and navigate mental health systems and stigma; expand evidenced early intervention programs to build resilience and capability and reduce intergenerational trauma; refine culturally safe and appropriate intake, assessment and referral processes; and develop a highly skilled mental health workforce that can promote individual recovery from complex trauma.
- QPASTT prepared a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Inquiry into Current Scheme Implementation and Forecasting for the NDIS. Our submission was prompted by an internal client-centred summary of experiences and their challenges attempting to engage with the NDIS. QPASTT's submission, and the reduced access of people from culturally diverse backgrounds to the NDIS, was recognised in the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry and QPASTT has since been invited to share our expertise with the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs who are exploring the experiences of young people with a disability in care. QPASTT has also shared this work with members of the FASSTT network to explore the breadth of experience across Australia.

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 2021/2022, QPASTT continued to be engaged in a number of research projects in partnership with Australian universities and research institutions, including:

- 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 the QUT School of Psychology and Counselling.
- Understanding intergenerational experiences of displacement and relocation: Implications for socially just policy and practice. This pilot study collaborates with The University of Queensland's Dr Dorothee Hölscher (Chief Investigator) and co-investigators Kani Kenyi and Jessica Subek of QPASTT.
- Stronger Futures – 5-year NHMRC-funded Centre of Research Excellence (CRE) – Prevention of Intergenerational Trauma. QPASTT is a community research partner in this initiative led by researchers from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Melbourne (Professor 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 the reversal of the current upward trends in rates of suicide, self-harm and mental health disorders in children and young people.

In 2021/2022, QPASTT continued or commenced internal evaluations of a number of our programs including:

- Asylum Seeker Mental Health Connect Program
- Women's Skillshare Group
- The HEAL expressive therapies pilot at Wilsonton State School in Toowoomba
- The Townsville Girls Talk Group

This year, QPASTT has established a monthly journal club for staff to continue growing an organisational understanding of research and evaluation, focusing on various topics relevant to practitioners and clients.

Recognising the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture



The United Nations International Day of Support for Victims of Torture calls on nations, civil society and individuals everywhere to unite in support of the hundreds of thousands of people around the world who have been victims of torture and those who are still tortured today.

This year, QPASTT commemorated this day with a special staff event focused on how we can support our clients, and each other, to stay healthy and connected - both to a community and a sense of purpose. The goal of torture is to isolate people, which is why connection and belonging is such a fundamental part of healing.

We also heard from our colleague and community leader Rima Flihan who spoke about the torture and human rights abuses that have been documented through the Syrian conflict and how hearing testimony from survivors can help us more deeply understand the experiences of those who have sought safety here in Australia.

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.

Sector Development

In 2021/2022, QPASTT delivered 65 education and training sessions to 1,506 participants.

These sessions aimed to improve the sector's capacity to be refugee trauma informed. Training was provided in Brisbane, Logan, Gold Coast, Toowoomba, Townsville and Cairns. The most common services asking for QPASTT Training are secondary education providers.

QPASTT also developed a series of videos for schools on how to support students experiencing acute stress due to incidents happening around the world. These have been used by schools to support students through the crisis in Afghanistan and war in Ukraine.

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 4.7/5.

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

"LOVED THE ANECDOTES AND EXAMPLES OF SITUATIONS AS WELL AS HUMOUR DOTTED THROUGHOUT."

"[WHAT I FOUND MOST HELPFUL WAS] THE CASE STUDIES AND THE TOOLS FOR HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE NAVIGATE EMOTIONS RESULTING FROM TRAUMA. IT WAS GOOD TO SEE AND HEAR HOW TO ACTUALLY USE THE TOOLS AND WHAT TO DO IN THOSE SITUATIONS."

"DEEPENED [MY] UNDERSTANDING OF THE VARIETY OF ISSUES THAT THESE STUDENTS FACE AND THE HIDDEN WAYS THEY MIGHT COPE WITH THESE ISSUES."

"IT WAS REALLY VALUABLE TO HAVE SPACE TO TALK WITH AND REFLECT WITH OTHERS IN A MEANINGFUL WAY. THIS WAS ONLY POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE SAFETY THAT EXISTED IN THE ROOM. I ALSO REALLY VALUED THE WAY [THE FACILITATORS] WERE LOCATED PERSONALLY WITHIN THE MATERIAL."

"CONTINUE TO REFLECT ON AND CHALLENGE MYSELF IN RELATION TO THE POWER AND PRIVILEGE THAT I HOLD AS A WHITE SETTLER AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST AND TO CONTINUE TO DO THE WORK I NEED TO DO IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE "HIDDEN" (TO ME) OPPRESSION IN MY PRACTICE."

"I FOUND THE INCORPORATION OF PLAY TO REINFORCE CONTENT VERY USEFUL."

"WINDOW OF TOLERANCE. I CAN KNOW AND MAKE MORE BOUNDARIES"

"JUST HEARING MY PEERS' PERSPECTIVES [WAS HELPFUL] BECAUSE IT GAVE ME UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT COMMON THOUGHTS AND WORRIES WE HAVE."

"THE BREADTH OF INFORMATION WAS AMAZING."

"GROUP CONVERSATION AND REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES."

"LOVED IT. THANK YOU. SO USEFUL AND INFORMATIVE."

OUTREACH SPOTLIGHT - GOLD COAST

QPASTT partners with agencies to deliver outreach services across Queensland, including on the Gold Coast where we have delivered outreach for over 23 years.

On the Gold Coast, we work in partnership with settlement caseworkers at the Multicultural Communities Council to support people from refugee backgrounds to access QPASTT counselling and other support. An ongoing relationship with the Australian Red Cross in Southport and Southport TAFE has enabled us to access counselling space to see clients two days per week. Our partnership with Southport TAFE has enabled QPASTT to be a connection point for advocacy for clients attending the TAFE who need extra support. TAFE staff have been very welcoming to our clients, like the security guard always making an effort to say hello in a client's language.

We attend quarterly meetings of the Gold Coast Multicultural Network to ensure we can work collaboratively with stakeholders to address issues that might be affecting our clients. For example, we are working with the Gold Coast QSTARS team and a range of other services to advocate for and support our clients experiencing housing stress or homelessness in the region.

We have developed strong partnerships with local schools, working with school guidance officers, leadership teams, and family support workers to better support students from refugee backgrounds. For example, QPASTT provided training for local guidance officers at one of their group supervision sessions, providing information around some common presentations of trauma and useful engagement techniques, particularly the importance of using interpreters to connect and communicate with parents so they can be included in their children's education.

BELOW: QPASTT Staff Bri (Counsellor/Advocate), Eddie (Youth Engagement Officer), together with Youth Voice member Nargis, present to students at a Gold Coast school.



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.

We are committed to diversity within our organisation and representing the lived experience of refugee survivors through our staff and board.

In 2021/2022, QPASTT was a team of over 111 staff from over 46 different countries, speaking 30 languages. 61% of our staff were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and 29% had lived refugee experience.

Our Commitment to Quality Practice and Development

QPASTT's Professional Supervision (PS) 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 2021/2022, the PS Team led an internal review and quality improvement process of QPASTT's clinical practice. This review has clarified the core practice competencies for staff working with clients, ensuring they align with supervision, annual staff reviews and probation processes. The PS Team has developed a clinical induction pack for new practitioners which includes updated training and guides. These improvements ensure QPASTT clinical staff have clear and consistent practice expectations and appropriate support and supervision as they support our clients through counselling and other interventions.

In addition to providing individual and group supervision to all QPASTT practitioners and several external agencies, our PS Team members delivered capacity building to RAILS (Refugee and Immigration Legal Services) on providing trauma informed legal support and self-care, and delivered four guest lectures to the Masters of Clinical Psychology and Masters of Education and Development Psychology programs at the University of Southern Queensland and Queensland University of Technology to build students' understanding of working with complex trauma.

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 to enable a mobile and flexible workforce.

In 2021/2022, we have equipped all our staff with laptops and enhanced data security measures through hard drive encryption and multifactor authentication. Being mobile enables our staff to continue working from home during COVID-19 peaks or natural disasters, and gives them access to information while working in the field on outreach and other appointments.

Governance

QPASTT's Board of Directors consists of people from refugee communities, human rights workers, legal and financial specialists and health and welfare workers who have experience in providing services to people from refugee backgrounds. Our Directors volunteer their time and expertise to lead QPASTT. In 2021/2022 we welcomed three new directors to our Board: Ms Adele Rice AM, Ms Kerrin Benson AM and Dr Ignacio Correa-Velez.



Professor Emeritus Keithia Wilson
Chair

Professor Emeritus Keithia Wilson has extensive experience as both an academic psychologist and tertiary educator at Griffith University for 26 years, and a practising psychologist in the areas of counselling, organisational and community psychology in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors for 37 years.

She has been nationally recognised for her effectiveness as an educator having received the Prime Minister's Award for the 2007 Australian University Teacher of the Year, and a National Senior Teaching Fellowship in 2010. Keithia also has extensive experience in leadership roles in management consultancy and professional training and development.

Her key areas of professional practice include the design and facilitation of change management processes, conflict management, strategic planning, professional supervision, interpersonal skills, group facilitation, and loss and grief counselling. In the not-for-profit sector, Keithia has served in voluntary leadership roles since 1984 on the Boards of five community organisations as President, Vice-President and Director. Keithia is currently in her 15th year as the President of QPASTT and 20th year as a Board member.



Dr Ian Mannion
Director

Dr Ian Mannion (MBBS (UQ) DRACOG FRACGP) has been practising medicine for over thirty years, and currently owns and manages the General Practice in Highgate Hill.

He has a broad range of experience which includes extensive hospital training, rural practice and emergency medicine. He has clinical expertise in refugee health with twenty years' experience in Brisbane and a stint with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). He has been a lecturer at the University of Queensland, teaching medical students in the field of general practice, and has helped to run early GP refugee training sessions in Brisbane. He has helped to set up refugee counselling services as well as the state's first refugee health clinic at the Mater Hospital.

Following QPASTT's incorporation in 1995, Ian became the inaugural Chair of the QPASTT Management Committee. After serving as Chair for a number of years, he handed the reins to Professor Wilson. Ian returned as a member of the Management Committee in 2014.



Robin Lonergan
Director

Robin Lonergan is a corporate lawyer with more than 35 years' experience acting for Australian and international clients in mergers and acquisitions and corporate advisory matters.

He has acted for many international clients setting up operations in Australia, advising on Australian operations, assisting with the expansion of business in Australia and in using Australia as a base for expansion into Asia. His clients include businesses in the manufacturing, tourism, aged care and resources industries, as well as professional services operations including medical practitioners.

Robin's expertise includes corporate governance and corporate structuring. He has been a member of the Management Committee, and now Board, of QPASTT since 2010.



Dr Pamela Douglas
Director

Dr Pamela Douglas has practised as a GP since 1987. She is also a researcher, holding positions as Adjunct Associate Professor with the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Griffith University, and as Senior Lecturer with the Primary Care Clinical Unit, The University of Queensland.

Pam is the founder and medical director of the charitable organisation Possums for Parents with Babies, and has for the past ten years specialised clinically in the care of parents with babies.

She is honoured to serve as a Director on the Board of QPASTT, and has done so since 2012.



Raziq Qasimi
Director

Raziq is a former refugee from Afghanistan who graduated with a Bachelor of Law and Justice (Honours) from the Queensland University of Technology in 2019. He joined the Board of QPASTT at the beginning of 2017.

Raziq has volunteered with numerous organisations within the refugee sector. He was President of the Youth Voice Committee, an initiative of QPASTT, which explores ideas and educates peers and the broader community on issues of social justice, social policy and government processes which affect young people. He also currently serves as a steering committee member at the National Refugee-led Advisory and Advocacy Group (NRAAG).

Raziq intends to practise law while continuing his work within the non-profit sector, helping marginalised people and communities in Australia and abroad. Raziq currently works with Legal Aid Queensland.



Fraser Power
Director

Fraser Power is legally trained in addition to holding qualifications in Business and Human Resources and is a specialist in the field of external affairs and stakeholder engagement, advocacy and relationship management to assist organisations to achieve their business outcomes.

He is currently the Stakeholder and Advocacy Manager for Australia Pacific LNG having worked on this large project since 2012. Fraser works across community investment, advocacy, stakeholder and government engagement, issues management and communications. He was previously the Customer Advocate at Ergon Energy and General Manager, Service Quality at Queensland Rail where he managed business improvement, complaint management and reporting functions. Prior to that, Fraser worked in the office of the Queensland Ombudsman.

Fraser has extensive experience in the refugee settlement and non-profit sector having worked with the UNHCR in Cambodia on refugee assessment and resettlement programs. Fraser has served on the board of QPASTT since 2012.



Dr Ignacio Correa-Velez
Director

Dr Ignacio Correa-Velez holds a MBBS and a Postgraduate Degree in Family Medicine and Community Health from Colombia, working there as a medical practitioner and university lecturer for several years prior to arriving in Australia in 1996. He completed a PhD in Population Health at the University of Queensland in 2004.

Ignacio has worked as an academic at several Australian universities for over 20 years, including the School of Population Health (University of Queensland), La Trobe Refugee Research Centre (La Trobe University, Melbourne) and the School of Public Health and Social Work (Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane). His teaching and research have focused on refugee and migrant health, mental health, social determinants of health, health inequities, and the intersection between health and human rights.

For 11 years, Ignacio was a member of the Management Committee of AMPARO Advocacy Inc, a not-for-profit community organisation that advocates for the rights of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with a disability. He is currently an academic staff member at QUT's School of Public Health and Social Work.

Ignacio has collaborated with QPASTT on research and evaluation initiatives since 2006, and was QPASTT co-CEO between February 2019 and January 2022. He is passionate about community-led initiatives to address the social determinants of health and mental health. Ignacio joined the QPASTT Board in February 2022.



Adele Rice AM
Director

Adele Rice AM is a nationally recognised expert in multicultural education. She was the Founding Principal of Milpera, Brisbane's state high school for refugee and migrant students, from when it opened in 1984 until she retired from the role in 2012, and was instrumental in establishing a study program that equipped the next generation of specialist ESL teachers who continue her legacy.

Adele's current positions include Board Member of the Global Learning Centre, Advisory Board Member of Asylum Circle, Member of the Global Citizenship Education Network, and Board Member of St James College. Adele joined the QPASTT Board in 2021.

Adele's contribution to education and multiculturalism has been recognised with many awards, including a Member of the Order of Australia, a Churchill Fellowship, a Save the Children White Flame Award, a Paul Harris Fellowship (rotary), a Queensland Multicultural Achiever Award, and the inaugural Director General's Award for Individual Contribution to Education. She was also named joint winner of the 2011 Professor Betty Watts Memorial Award for an Outstanding Contribution to Teaching. She was made an honorary Fellow of the Australian College of Educational Leaders in 2011 and received an Honorary Doctorate from the Queensland University of Technology in 2020.



Kerrin Benson AM
Director

Kerrin Benson AM is a social worker with 35 years' experience in the not for profit sector and government, both in Australia and internationally. Her experience includes work in child protection, community development, homelessness and domestic violence.

Kerrin has spent the last 20 years in executive roles in the settlement sector, with 17 years as CEO of Multicultural Australia. She is passionate about values-driven leadership.

In 2019, Kerrin joined Peter Shergold AO and Margaret Piper AM on an expert panel reviewing settlement in Australia.

Kerrin sits on the Refugee and Migrant Services Advisory Council advising the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs. Kerrin is also a Director of the Board of Welcoming Australia.

In her spare time, Kerrin indulges her passion for the arts, most recently as Executive Producer of Brothers Book Club.

In 2021, Kerrin was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).





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