



Impact Report 2022/2023

Donate to QPASTT

For over 25 years, QPASTT has been supporting people from refugee backgrounds to live lives liberated from the harms of torture, trauma and human rights injustice. We nurture meaningful futures by assisting people from refugee backgrounds to heal, belong and thrive.

Your donation enables QPASTT to:

- Support the immediate needs of asylum seekers living in the community who have limited or no access to housing, medical and health services or social services.
- Deliver community-based programs that promote empowerment and social connection that are not funded by our grants and contracts.

QPASTT is a registered charity and all donations over \$2 are tax deductible.



Donate at qpastt.org.au/donate

To discuss corporate and philanthropic partnership opportunities with QPASTT, contact Sally Stewart, Co-CEO for Partnerships and Opportunity Development at sallystewart@qpastt.org.au



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, 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.

Acknowledgement of Country



QPASTT acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the land where we live and work and we pay our respect to their cultures, their ancestors and their elders – past and present.

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, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have nurtured communities of belonging and thriving and we work in solidarity towards a future of healing and justice.

QPASTT supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Our commitment to equality and inclusion



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.

Our Vision

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

Our Purpose

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.

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I’m proud to present the 2022/2023 QPASTT Impact Report and share the achievements of our dedicated staff and the work they do in partnership with communities to ensure all people can live lives liberated from the harms of torture, trauma and human rights injustices.

Local communities continued to be affected by protracted conflicts and political unrest in Myanmar, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Ukraine, Iran and Sudan with our staff supporting individuals, families and communities through heightened levels of distress and fears for loved ones. Devastating natural disasters including the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria in February also affected people’s wellbeing in Queensland. QPASTT deeply values our relationships with cultural community representatives and the support and insight they offer that enable us to direct our support in ways that will most benefit community members.

This year, QPASTT successfully completed our reaccreditation under the National Standards for Mental Health Services, receiving commendations for our commitment to client access and feedback, listening to the voice of the community, and proactively engaging clients, carers and communities in the planning, delivery and evaluation of our programs. What strikes me about these commendations is how strongly they reflect the values upon which QPASTT was founded 27 years ago - to be an empowering community-based service informed by the needs of survivors, their families and communities. I’m so proud that this organisation continues to centre partnerships and collaboration with communities in all that we do.

The Board acknowledges QPASTT’s Co-Chief Executives, Liz Gordon and Sally Stewart, who in their first year of leadership have realised key achievements including a state-wide listening tour with staff and ongoing consultation with community leaders and representatives and our stakeholders, informing their future-focused organisational planning to ensure that our services are responsive to client and community needs.

A welcome increase to our funding through the Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma announced in the 2023/2024 Federal Budget has enabled us to increase our staff supporting regional communities in Toowoomba, Townsville and Cairns and enhance our clinical supervision and sector capacity building programs. We look forward to bringing this increased capacity to our Strategic Planning process commencing in 2024 and sharing its impact in future years.

On behalf of the Board, I congratulate our colleague and

founding member of QPASTT, Adele Rice AM, who was recognised in the 2023 Queensland Greats Awards for her contribution to education, inclusion and settlement. This award honours extraordinary individuals who have made a meaningful contribution to Queensland and Adele continues to build an incredible legacy of partnership and collaboration that enables all people, particularly those from more recently arrived communities, to make their own positive contributions.

More strengths identified in our accreditation were our collaborative culture, defined by strong relationships, kindness and a deep commitment to the work and to each other. The Board is so proud of the QPASTT culture, and we recognise our staff as its leaders and torchbearers.

I also acknowledge the contributions of my colleagues on the Board who continue to volunteer their time and expertise as committed stewards of QPASTT’s vision. And we are proud to continue our support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and our deep commitment to First Nation Australians.

Finally, I extend our deepest gratitude to Queensland’s refugee and cultural communities. Your insights, strengths and contributions to a society in which all people can heal, belong and thrive continues to inspire us.

Professor Emerita Keithia Wilson
Chair, QPASTT



▲ Professor Emerita Keithia Wilson, Chair of QPASTT, with members of our Women’s Skillshare Group at the launch of *How to Cook Hope*.

From the Co-Chief Executives

Our first year as Co-Chief Executives has been shaped by significant global events and increased demand for services.

Overall demand for QPASTT services increased by 7%. Demand for our counselling services increasing by 12%, exceeding the new normal established during the COVID-19 pandemic which saw referrals into our counselling service doubling. This year, we supported 2,409 people through counselling and 5,966 through group programs. Our client group spans 86 countries of origin. 45% of our clients required greater than six-months intervention, signifying the complexity of refugee-trauma recovery and the impact of social and economic stressors on wellbeing. We have seen a 90% increase in the time spent responding to community and stakeholder requests on the QPASTT Support Line. This indicates the heightened demand for immediate emotional and referral support in response to cost of living pressures, housing stress and international conflicts and crises.

People from Afghanistan remain at 14% of our counselling case load and we are grateful for additional funding through the Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma which has allowed us to provide continuity of support for those newly arrived and the existing community who continue to be impacted by the situation in Afghanistan.

Cost of living pressures and housing stress is having a significant impact on the wellbeing and recovery of clients and communities across the state. Insecure housing and homelessness exacerbate mental health difficulties and can trigger trauma responses related to displacement and a lack of physical security and stability. Our data indicates at least 10% of people we support are homeless or at risk of homelessness – a fact we have raised to government this year through our submission to the Queensland Housing Summit.

44% of our clients are children and young people aged under 25 years and supporting healthy children, young people and their families and reducing the impact of intergenerational trauma is a major focus of our work. For presenting clients under 18 years of age, 72% report experiencing severe or moderate traumatic stress symptoms and/or severe or moderate family difficulties, with 68% reporting severe or moderate anxiety symptoms. This year we were able to expand our work with parents and, with an increase in federal funding announced in June, we are devoting additional resources to enhance our family counselling and family-focused group work support.

The Resolution of Status Visa announced by the federal government this year was a welcome development for many temporary visa holders who now have a pathway to permanent protection and QPASTT partnered with RAILS to support people to apply for this visa. Unfortunately, considerable distress remains for those who continue to be ineligible for permanent protection and are excluded from education, employment and family reunion opportunities.

We remain highly concerned about the long term and intergenerational mental health and psycho-social impacts for individuals and their families who are in held detention, community detention or on temporary visas. We have continued our advocacy to government directly and through our membership of the Forum of Australian Services to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT) to find alternatives to indefinite detention and ensure the human rights of those who have sought protection in Australia are upheld.

Systemic advocacy to ensure equity of opportunity remains a key strategic focus and this year we have shared our community-informed knowledge in a number of consultations, including the Queensland Housing Summit and Youth Strategy Consultation. Federally, we have engaged in numerous policy reviews including the role of permanent migration in nation-building and a review of the NDIS.

We have been privileged to build our relationships and work alongside many community leaders who have supported their communities through challenging times. We greatly respect their leadership and commitment. We thank all our community partners who bring their cultural expertise and wisdom to conversations about mental health and wellbeing and help ensure QPASTT remains a culturally safe and responsive organisation.

This year, we paid tribute to Paula Peterson who retired as the National FASSTT Coordinator. Paula was also the inaugural Director of QPASTT, leading this organisation for 12 years, and was central to the development of QPASTT's service model and culture. We are grateful to Paula and outgoing CEO Jamila Padhee for their significant contributions to QPASTT and mentorship this year.

Perseverance is the QPASTT value that stood out to us in our first year of leadership and we thank our staff, volunteers, Board Members and community and sector partners for their support and dedication.

Liz Gordon & Sally Stewart
Co-Chief Executive Officers



▲ QPASTT Co-CEOs Liz Gordon (left) and Sally Stewart (right) with retiring FASSTT National Coordinator Paula Peterson.

CFO's Report

QPASTT's total revenue was \$10.39 million in FY23 (FY22 - \$9.7 million), which represents an increase of 7.6%. This was generally in line with our budget, with the exception of additional funding from the federal Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT) to support people arriving from Afghanistan.

2022/2023 was a year of recovery for QPASTT, achieving a full year net operating surplus of \$551,000. Taking into account the \$1.55 million unrealised gain on asset re-evaluation of our Toowoomba and Slacks Creek properties, our total full year comprehensive income has increased by \$2.1 million.

Salaries and wages continue to be the biggest expenses for QPASTT totalling \$8.2 million, or 79% of total revenue. This includes salaries and wages, leave and superannuation, as well as continued professional development and training. This figure is lower than FY22, which is in line with the difficulties QPASTT experienced in regional recruitment.

Looking ahead, QPASTT has successfully extended contracts with PASTT and Queensland Health for the next three years, providing opportunities to stabilise and look ahead strategically.

We anticipate that salaries and wages will continue to be the biggest expenses for the organisation. Annual wages increased by 5.75% as a result of Fair Work decisions and compulsory superannuation increases to 11% in FY24. Budgeted salaries and wages exceed 80% of total revenue.

There will be a significant increase in our investment in cyber security and contract IT compliance needs. With 12 office and outreach locations, property maintenance expenses also account for a fair share of costs within our annual budget.

QPASTT continues to maintain its healthy asset and liabilities ratio. The current ratio of 2.1 indicates QPASTT's high level of liquidity and ability to settle short-term obligations.

Looking ahead, QPASTT has successfully extended contracts with PASTT and Queensland Health for the next three years, providing opportunities to stabilise and look ahead strategically.

Our 2022/2023 audited financial statement, which was prepared by our auditors Haywards Chartered Accountants, is in compliance with all the applicable Australian Accounting Standards. The audit report is unqualified.

Finally, we would like to thank our funders and donors 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



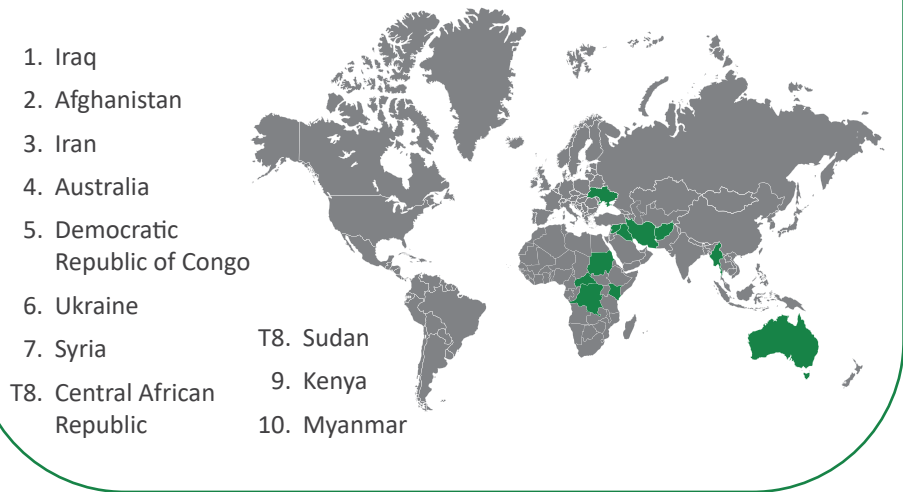
Key Figures

IN 2022/2023...

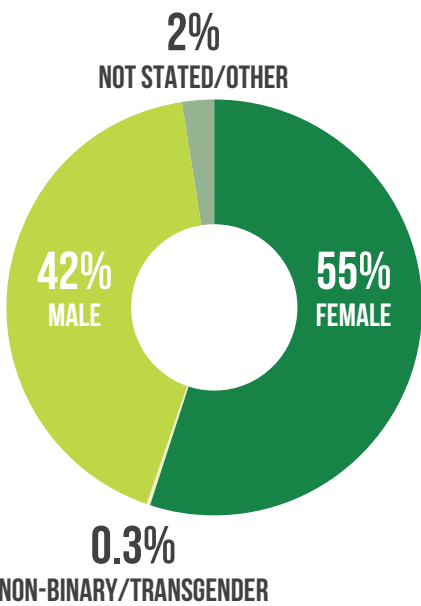
We supported **2,409** individuals with direct counselling across **13,800** sessions (an increase of 12%)

Our clients span **86** countries of origin

Top 10 countries of origin of our counselling clients



Gender breakdown of counselling clients



Age breakdown of counselling clients



5,966 people participated in QPASTT groups, events and activities (an increase of 6%)

We received **2,146** new referrals into our service (an increase of 9%)



We supported **231** people seeking asylum (an increase of 6%)

Our Support Line provided an average of **55** hours of support to callers per month (an increase of 90%)

Over 44% of our counselling clients were 25 years and under

We grew our community of supporters across social media by **32%**

Our Challenge

Oppression, persecution and human rights violations can impact on 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:

Collaborating for Impact

QPASTT centres partnership and collaboration 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

Collaborating with the Queensland Police Service to develop training for new recruits

QPASTT was invited to collaborate with First Nations Police Liaison Officers within the Queensland Police Service to contribute to cultural and trauma awareness training which is mandatory for new recruits to enable them to better respond to the needs of First Nations and multicultural community members.

This initiative emerged out of the Royal Commission in the Police Response to Domestic and Family Violence and QPASTT's contribution included content focused on understanding how trauma can be triggered, what a trauma response can look like and practical strategies for responding within the context of police work.

We initially completed a pilot of four training sessions and our contract has been extended to continue this work into 2023/2024.

Participant Feedback

“ I found the training very informative and well-presented and left feeling far more confident in any future dealings with First Nations and culturally diverse people. ”

“ I think I now understand the basic principles which should be followed to show respect or empathy. ”

“ I understand better how people can shut down after a traumatic event and that we need to be patient when questioning people. ”

Education Queensland – Darling Downs Southwest Region training collaboration

We developed a series of self-paced, online training sessions for Education Queensland to build the capacity of teachers and staff within the Darling Downs Southwest Region to incorporate trauma informed and culturally informed strategies into their engagement with students and families from refugee backgrounds.

Each online session was tailored to classroom and school-based settings and was complemented with face-to-face discussion sessions at our Toowoomba office to enable teachers to share their experiences and deepen their understanding with QPASTT training and clinical staff.

Workers' Rights Education and Support Project

For many, employment is a fundamental component of belonging and thriving, giving a sense of identity, purpose, contribution and financial stability. This year, QPASTT collaborated with Multicultural Australia and the Queensland Community Alliance to deliver a four-year project, Workers Rights Education and Support (WRES).

Over the lifetime of the project, one hundred Community Champions from refugee and migrant backgrounds will receive training in basic employment rights and then be assisted by the project team to engage with their ethnicity and faith-based communities. The project also encourages migrant workers who have experienced exploitation to report and seek resolution and will be documenting impediments in formal systems of support for workers to address work rights issues.

The first year of the project included an initial scoping study and a pilot of training development and delivery to the first cohort of Community Champions. The breadth and extent of exploitation of migrant workers was beyond what was anticipated, requiring

28 Community Champions
from 12 cultural communities
delivered 19 workshops attended by
325 community members.

additional support by the project team. Across all the communities engaged within the first year, there was an absence of formal help-seeking and low levels of understanding amongst community members of their rights within the workplace or avenues for support. Many migrant workers are also extremely fearful of losing the income they have and are unwilling to risk their future employment. Those few who did attempt to seek help from formal services found this experience difficult and stressful.

As we continue to deliver this project, we will collect learnings to inform system and service improvement and continue to advocate for grass roots community programs to educate and build capacity of migrant workers to advocate for their right to safe and fair employment.

Partnership with the Queensland African Communities Council

QPASTT has continued to partner with the Queensland African Communities Council (QACC) and their African Youth Support Council (AYSC) to support community-led initiatives that promote healing and belonging.

QACC and AYSC have established Youth Mentoring and Family Support Programs that provide early intervention and rehabilitation programs to young people from African Backgrounds living in Southeast Queensland, including those who are at risk of or already in contact with the youth justice system. They use an “African Village” model to deliver their programs. Culturally and traditionally, most African people believe that a child belongs to everyone in the community. If a child does something great, everyone takes pride, celebrates and uses it to encourage and motivate others to do the same. Equally, everybody in the community or village has a moral responsibility to contribute to the upbringing of a child.

QPASTT supports AYSC's youth and community activities at African Village Hubs in Redbank Plains, Geebung and Moorooka. An independent evaluation of the first year of the Youth Mentoring and Family Support Programs by the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) published in 2022 found that the programs have contributed to young people's sense of safety, engagement, agency, connection, belonging and subjective wellbeing. The evaluation found that QACC's Youth Mentors play a key role in fostering young peoples' engagement, connection and wellbeing.

Importantly, the evaluation found that in less than one year of operation, the African Youth Drop-in Centre in Redbank Plains has become a safe place of connection and belonging for many young people from African backgrounds and their friends, where they feel welcome, and where they can socialise responsibly, learn new skills, and seek support.

Third Queer Culture

In 2022/2023, QPASTT continued to auspice and support Third Queer Culture, a Brisbane-based peer-led social, support and advocacy group for people who have diverse gender and sexual identities and are seeking safety in Australia.

This year, Third Queer Culture members have attended the national Queer Displacements Conference in Sydney, participated in World Pride events, completed ethical storytelling training, spoken at professional forums and begun publicly advertising the group and its activities while continuing to organise social events for group members.

The group itself is ethnically diverse, with group members bringing a wide variety of pre-arrival and post-arrival experiences. A common experience is the isolation and loneliness of building a new life in Australia without family and often limited engagement with cultural communities. Third Queer Culture provides a unique and well-needed opportunity to break isolation, and build social connection and wellbeing.

While gender and sexuality diversity may still be sensitive topics amongst many cultural communities, Third Queer Culture has been successful in securing project grant money from a refugee-led organisation to run a film screening that aims to build awareness of the experience of LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers.

QPASTT is grateful for the continued support from the Pride Foundation to fund the group's activities.



▲ Third Queer Culture members and QPASTT staff at Brisbane Pride.

“ We hope people will understand the experience of LGBTQIA+ refugees, stand in solidarity with us and share the opportunity to live in peace with dignity. ”
Edwin, Peer Leader at Third Queer Culture

“ Being part of Third Queer Culture helped me to create a place where I feel safe as a queer person. ”
Miguel, Peer Leader at Third Queer Culture



HEAL is a school-based expressive arts therapy program supporting the trauma recovery of young people from refugee backgrounds.

Established in 2004 by Jane Griffin OAM, HEAL was run by a team of dedicated volunteers until it joined with QPASTT in 2021.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Continuing our longstanding partnership with QPAC to deliver the Songs of Hope fundraising concert. In 2023, Casey Donovan headlined a diverse program of musicians and performers, and we created a video sharing the impact of Songs of Hope over the past seven years.
- We developed a Pilot Program for schools to trial HEAL for a 10-week term and experience its benefits.
- We delivered a 10-week Pilot program at Marsden State High School, which has since expanded to a 20-week pilot with the school seeking funding for HEAL to be a permanent offering in 2024.
- We secured grant funding for two Dance Movement Therapy Pilots, to be run in St James College and Marsden State High School in 2023/2024.
- We developed a Partnership Proposal to attract additional corporate and philanthropic funding to support our work.

Our Response:

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 intake, individual advocacy and counselling support where everyone feels:

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



Individual and Family Counselling

Welcoming new clients to QPASTT – our Intake and Connect Team

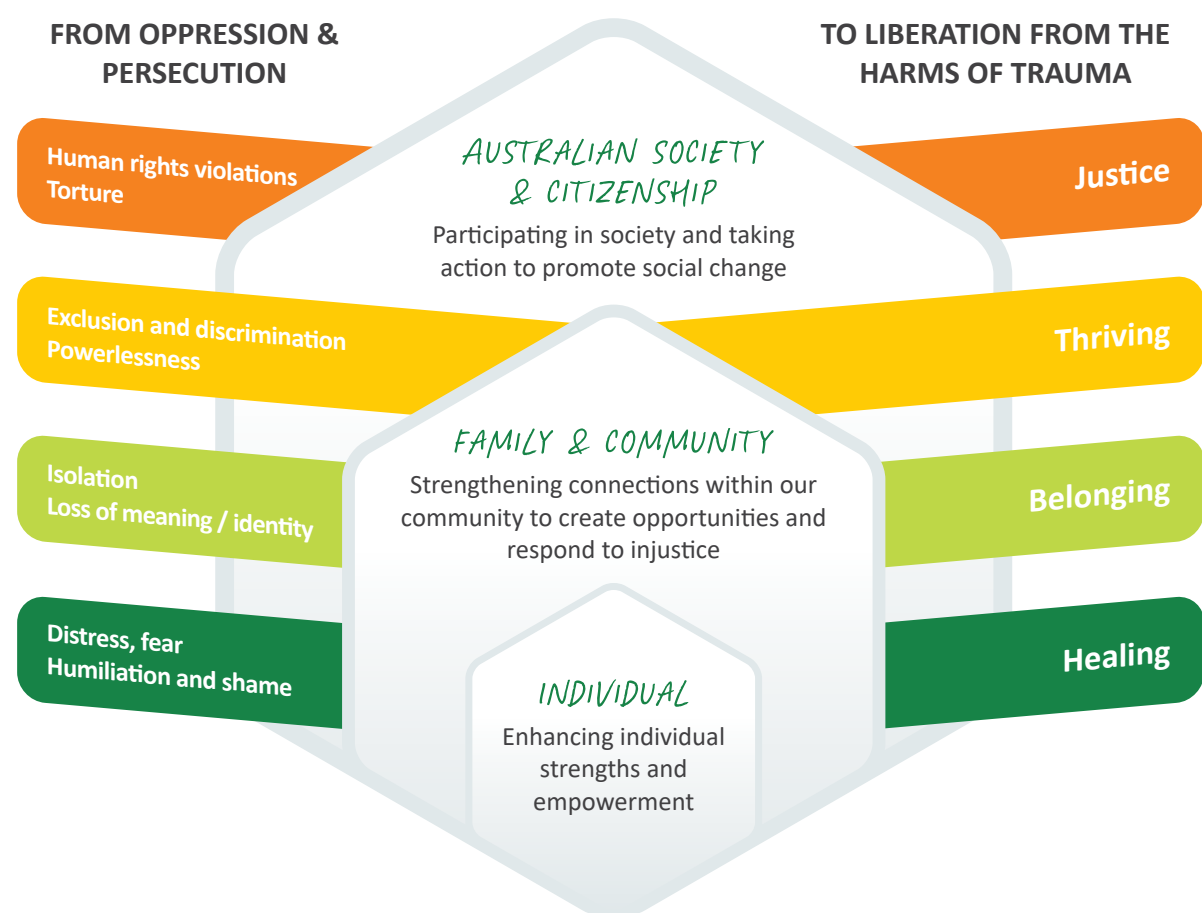
Our Intake and Connect team are the first point of contact for individuals and families in Southeast Queensland referred to QPASTT.

The team is staffed by qualified mental health practitioners who provide initial screening and assessment, brief psychological interventions, parenting support, advocacy support and group programs. Clients who require ongoing counselling after being screened by our Intake team are being seen by our counselling staff within one to four months.

50%

of people referred to QPASTT have their needs met through our intake model, reducing our counselling waiting list times.

Our refugee trauma recovery framework



QPASTT's approach to counselling

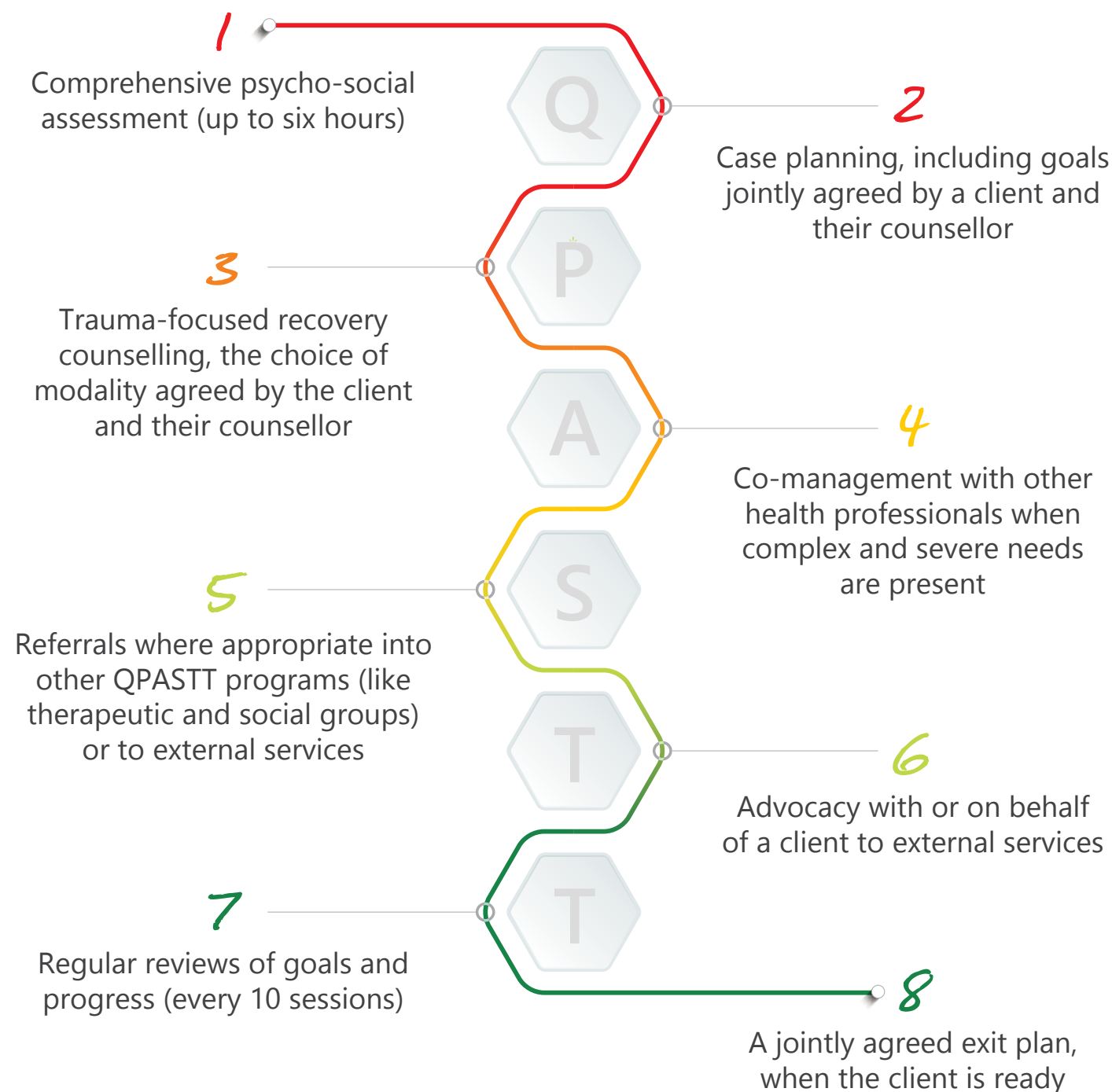
Although people from refugee backgrounds have survived horrific experiences, they bring with them numerous strengths and tremendous resilience of spirit.

QPASTT's Counsellor/Advocates build on this, 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.

In 2022/2023,
QPASTT Counsellor/
Advocates supported
2,409 people

The counselling journey



Highlight

Animal Assisted Therapies

QPASTT encourages innovation in our service delivery. Intake and Connect Team leader Noémie Rigaud has brought Animal Assisted Therapies to QPASTT with her Golden Retriever Tango.

“In trauma-counselling, our initial goals are often about building safety and trust with a client. Tango loves meeting new people and his presence can support a client’s initial engagement with QPASTT. A first session with a counsellor can be intimidating; Tango can help demystify that engagement, bringing a sense of play and supporting the therapist to build rapport with a client.

For torture and trauma survivors, who have had trust in people shattered, a dog or other animal can offer a point of connection and trust with a living being. I had a client experiencing severe depression who generally presented as flat and unable to connect with more joyful feelings. With Tango, who was offering lots of hugs and interactions, the client giggled. It’s quite amazing how Tango’s presence can influence people’s state of being.

A client who had been in prolonged immigration detention attended QPASTT’s office for a counselling session. He saw Tango and asked to say hello. Tango gave him lots of big hugs and licks and the client laughed and smiled. He told us that later that night “I was in my bedroom (back in detention), and I thought about that hug, and I started laughing.” Tango was able to offer a strong experience of care and playfulness for this person that resonated with them long after the interaction.

There are ethical and cultural considerations for bringing a therapy animal into an organisation. We ensure clients provide informed consent. Tango’s consent is important too. I observe his body language and interactions to ensure he is enjoying working in this setting. Tango undergoes both temperament and skills tests every year and as Tango’s handler, I need to be able to demonstrate emotional regulation and an ability to read Tango’s body language, stress signals and manage any risks for our clients and Tango.

Some cultures and religions have particular views about dogs and their appropriate place. Many people will have had negative interactions with dogs or other animals that may leave them feeling uncomfortable. We take an approach of cultural safety and humility, where client choice is paramount. We don’t impose Tango on anyone - clients or staff. His presence is always announced to staff in advance. He is always on a leash when

“For torture and trauma survivors, who have had trust in people shattered, a dog or other animal can offer a point of connection and trust with a living being.”

outside the therapy room, and a sign with a photo of him is placed on the office front door to announce his presence, with the translation in several languages.

Recently Tango and I went to a QPASTT school holiday camp. There was a group of young people who were all scared of dogs, and yet they swarmed around Tango, patting him and taking him for walks. It was a great example of survivors being able to articulate their fears and still step out of their comfort zone. It demonstrated a significant level of resilience and the possibilities that animals can bring to therapeutic work.”



▲ Young people enjoy Tango’s company, with handler Noémie Rigaud.

Hear from QPASTT

Counsellor/Advocates

Haadas Lev Tov

“Trauma counselling has a strong focus on building a relationship of trust between a client and a counsellor. It’s essential that a client can trust that I am on their side, and that they feel comfortable and safe to share how they’re feeling and what support they need.”

I have studied a range of theories and therapeutic modalities that I can offer to clients in sessions, including Narrative Exposure Therapy, Parts Therapy, EMDR (eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing) and somatic therapies, but I learn from our clients about what they need and what works for them.

People won’t always want to talk about the specific details of their trauma experiences, which is absolutely fine and not necessary for healing. We can offer psychoeducation to explain how the brain and nervous system respond to traumatic experiences and help people understand the symptoms they are experiencing are normal. Sometimes people need support to explore their strengths and develop coping strategies that work for them.”



Viktoria Fomina

“I bring a systems perspective to my work, which seeks to understand a client’s unique circumstances - for example their relationships with their family, their connections to culture and the broader community, their socioeconomic experiences – and the influence they have on the client’s life and wellbeing.”

This holistic approach can help a client to identify areas of their life they might want to change and help us work out appropriate interventions. This approach is also at the core of the advocacy work within our role at QPASTT. We recognise that having basic human needs met and your human rights upheld is essential for a person’s wellbeing, and so when necessary we work to ensure a client has access to safe housing, food, health services and education.

I use a lot of Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) techniques in my work, which help people develop everyday skills and strategies that move them towards their desired quality of life. People who come to QPASTT for support have lived through very difficult experiences. But through their stories I hear how incredibly strong and resilient they are. Talking to a Counsellor can be helpful for people to build on those strengths and skills and apply them to the parts of their life they would like to change or improve now.”



Counselling for children and young people at QPASTT

Taryn McBurney

TEAM LEADER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH COUNSELLING

“Children’s brains and cognition are still developing, and they tend to experience the world and communicate in more embodied ways – through play, art, games and physical activity. Children are more likely to ‘act out’ when they’re emotionally dysregulated and might not be able to verbally communicate how they’re feeling or what they have experienced.”



Our approach to supporting trauma recovery in children and young people is similarly experiential, drawing on expressive modalities like art and play therapy. Healing can happen when a child feels safe with a trusted adult, can show their emotional dysregulation and have the adult help them contain it. Experiencing safe touch through tactile art projects and sand play, or role playing with toys and games can help a child resolve their trauma experiences. “

Supporting the development of emerging practitioners

Kane Solly

MASTERS OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT

“I heard about QPASTT when Amy (QPASTT’s Senior Leader for Clinical Services) came to speak at my university. She spoke about healing as happening in more than just an individual space, but also in relation to community and seeing people as parts of systems, which is something that isn’t really incorporated in Western approaches to psychology.”



It’s been enlightening and interesting to be exposed to this broader approach to healing which resonates with my values and approach to work and life, and my understanding that every act is political.

QPASTT has provided a very supportive environment and induction into its values, culture, ethos and approach to working with clients. I’ve enjoyed the opportunity to learn, grow and challenge myself to be the best practitioner that I can. It’s been exciting to see that QPASTT is an organisation living its values at all levels, in how it engages with its clients, its staff and the broader community. “

Supporting People Seeking Asylum

Our Moringa team provides intake, brief intervention and counselling support and advocacy to people who are seeking asylum in Australia. This includes people residing in the community on temporary visas, in community detention and those held in immigration detention.

Asylum Seeker Mental Health Connect Program

Funded by Queensland Health, Asylum Seeker Mental Health Connect is a joint response by QPASTT and World Wellness Group to the complex mental health needs of people seeking asylum living in the community.

QPASTT provides an initial psychosocial assessment followed by four to six sessions to support people to manage their trauma-related symptoms, build coping and problem-solving skills, and develop connections to social supports and services. Those requiring further specialist trauma-related support are referred to other QPASTT programs. People with complex mental health needs including addiction, substance abuse or sub-acute care needs are referred to World Wellness Group for intensive support and case management by specialist nurses.

IN 2022/2023,
the Asylum Seeker Mental
Health Connect Program
supported 131 clients with
individual interventions
and engaged 102 clients
in group activities.



IN 2022/2023,
we supported
231 people seeking
asylum in Australia

The reality for people seeking asylum in Australia

People seeking asylum in Australia live with high levels of stress and uncertainty due to their visa status. Most people are on short-term bridging visas including final departure visas. Some have no visas. Barriers to accessing housing, employment, health care and legal representation has had a detrimental impact on people’s mental health and wellbeing. The lack of access to the most basic of resources as well as ongoing visa uncertainty represents a significant barrier to trauma recovery and belonging in the local community.

Our counsellors have witnessed ongoing presentations of severe distress, panic and helplessness requiring intensive stabilising therapeutic support and advocacy. It has been particularly challenging for counsellors to exit Asylum Seeker Mental Health Connect clients after their sixth session when they remain in highly precarious situations. It has been necessary to extend the number of sessions for some clients to support them to manage their symptoms, address hopelessness and reduce suicide risk. Others have been referred to further counselling to respond to the ongoing impact of visa uncertainty on their mental health and manage unresolved refugee trauma.

Supporting People Seeking Asylum *Continued*

The Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance Program

QPASTT is a partner in the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance (ASRA) Program, which provides emergency relief, individual and family support, health, legal, employment, mental health and housing supports to people seeking asylum. ASRA is a collaboration of seven partner agencies, with funding provided by Multicultural Affairs Queensland.

Our staff attend ASRA Hubs at Indooroopilly, Logan and Gatton, providing individual mental health support as well as group activities. Individual support includes incidental counselling and advocacy for people often presenting with high levels of distress regarding their visa status.

Our group activities have included games as well as sensory-focused expressive arts activities for adults and children, encouraging choice, autonomy, social connection, play and creative self-expression. These activities help to create a warm and welcoming environment at the ASRA Hubs and enable QPASTT and other service providers to build connection and rapport with clients.

QPASTT also provides consultative support across the ASRA consortium relating to the mental health impacts of torture and trauma informed practice.

QPASTT is strongly opposed to the use of prolonged detention and advocates for community release wherever possible.

Supporting people in immigration detention

Our counsellors support people held in immigration detention at the Brisbane Immigration Transit Authority (BITA) and in Alternative Places of Detention (APODs).

While many clients have primary traumatic experiences of refugee torture and trauma prior to arrival to Australia, the secondary trauma of the detention environment and related systemic issues, including the risk of deportation, the indefinite nature of their detention, and lack of choice and control, contributes to a sense of powerless and loss of hope for people. As a result, QPASTT counsellors have supported people with presentations of high distress and chronic suicidal ideation. Conditions within an APOD can include restricted movement, the strong presence of guards and at times the use of mechanical restraints. It is apparent through our sessions with clients that the detention environment and system can trigger trauma related memories, making it difficult to establish a sense of safety and stability.

Therapeutic interventions for clients in held detention and community detention are aimed at increasing healthy coping mechanisms, reducing risk, improving flexibility of thought and maintaining a future orientation focusing on areas where autonomy is available despite the detention environment.

Our legal advocacy for people in detention includes liaison with legal teams, providing reports for hearings and being witnesses in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. We support clients to take action on other matters that are important to them through in-session phone calls, and we advocate for clients within the detention environment, including for access to appropriate disability supports, healthcare services and transport without mechanical restraints.

Staff Spotlight

Jeane is a Counsellor in our Moringa team, supporting people seeking asylum.

“ Being in the detention system can take away a person's sense of dignity, identity, autonomy and connection. Our clients express their feelings of being segregated and discriminated against, even of feeling worthless. We aim to provide a safe, non-judgmental space for people to speak about their experiences before and after arriving in Australia. We can provide emotional support and validation which can help people gain back a sense of self-esteem and control, even though their asylum status remains the same. Having someone who they can trust and talk to about the injustices they are experiencing can be very therapeutic.

We see people presenting with sleep issues, nightmares, flashbacks, excessive worries, problems with memory and concentration and suicidal thoughts. Understanding these may be trauma reactions rather than unexplained symptoms can be helpful for people. On the other hand, it's important not to assume all symptoms are coming from trauma, especially when people are struggling to have their basic needs met. If I can support someone to access emergency relief so they can buy food, that might help reduce their immediate stress.

Doing this work is a passion for me. As someone with lived experience who speaks five languages, it's rewarding when I can use my skills to support others. I was supporting a client who runs a business and is able to support herself. Her visa was about to expire, which meant she would lose her work rights and her business. I was able to support her through advocacy with a legal service provider and she was able to get her visa renewed.

The advocacy component of our counselling role makes a real difference to people's lives. **“**

Read more on our website, qpastt.org.au/news



Suicide Prevention Work

In response to a number of suicides in refugee communities in recent years, QPASTT has been working with cultural communities and Primary Health Networks to improve culturally responsive suicide prevention strategies and postvention support.

Our Intake and Connect team have built strong relationships with several cultural communities recently affected by suicide and, by community invitation, delivered mental health workshops to community members, including more than 200 young people.

Building on trust between community leaders and QPASTT staff, our team was able to facilitate the connection and engagement of these community groups into our Communities Healing to Thrive program. Mental health is a stigmatised topic, but there is now more community readiness to engage in discussion to support the wellbeing of the communities, respond to distress within the community, and seek support from services.

Early intervention for young people at risk of suicide

QPASTT delivers the NEXUS program in Greater Brisbane and Logan which provides early intervention services to young people at risk of suicide. Funded by Brisbane South Primary Health Network since 2017, NEXUS complements both mainstream mental health services and QPASTT's torture and trauma counselling services to address important unmet needs.

This includes individual counselling and school-based youth work to support young people's protective factors, assessing and managing risk and enabling trauma recovery. This is also complemented by group work with young people which enables improved social connections and sense of belonging, skill building, positive collective experiences and warm entry to QPASTT's individual programs for those at risk.

Our Response:

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)

Supporting Communities of Belonging

IN 2022/2023...

QPASTT delivered group sessions to **5,966** participants.

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.

Groups delivered by QPASTT in 2022/2023 included:

Impact Men's Soccer Group

The Impact Soccer Group supports men aged 25 years and over to reduce their isolation, increase their sense of safety, mental health literacy and physical activity. The group enables participants to build social connections, establish informal support networks and supports men to connect with service providers, receive psychoeducation and settlement life skills.

Wangarra Men's Group

Wangarra Men's Group is designed to facilitate emotional wellbeing, physical and mental health, social connection and cohesion for men aged between 25 and 65 years old across Greater Brisbane, through a variety of fun, therapeutic and educational activities.

Chai and Connect - Logan

Chai and Connect was designed to introduce and encourage newly arrived women from Afghanistan, particularly older women who were experiencing difficulty engaging in community activities, to connect with one another through culturally resonant collective arts and crafts, tea and conversation. Group facilitators were able to engage participants in discussions about mental health and trauma and introduce support pathways for community and service engagement.

Hope Group

The Hope Group was developed to respond to the needs of newly arrived Afghan families who were coming to the end of their engagement period but still needed support in order to settle into their new lives in Brisbane. Group activities were designed to support parents to engage with services and explore their needs in the safety of their peer-group.

Seedling Women's Group

The Seedling Women's Group was designed to support the settlement transition of newly arrived Afghan women who were experiencing stress, isolation and a loss of hope due to the political situation in Afghanistan. Group activities included mindfulness, art-based therapeutic activities, kayaking, Persian percussion classes, yoga, swimming lessons and cultural celebrations like Nowruz (Persian New Year) and International Women's Day.

Participant Feedback:

“ I enjoyed being in the group and having a break from the responsibility of taking care of my family. This a time just for me. ”

“ Playing Daff (a Persian drum) is relaxing, and I can now sleep better. I still worry about family back home but learning a new skill is helping me to disconnect from those thoughts and relax a little. ”



Mental Health Information Sessions and Culturally Responsive Workshops for the Afghan & Ukrainian Communities

For some people, group interventions are a preferred way to engage in recovery and they can be effective in reducing distress and improving strategies for coping and wellbeing. Groupwork can also provide a positive experience that enables people to access further support such as counselling if needed.

QPASTT delivered Mental Health Information Sessions for Afghan adults and young people at Southbank, Inala and Loganlea TAFEs, raising awareness about mental health and emotional wellbeing, introducing QPASTT services and normalising help-seeking for mental health. Facilitators provided psychoeducation about the impact of trauma and challenges relating to the refugee journey and settlement, drawing on the existing coping strategies and experiences of participants to inform discussions and support connections across the group.



We worked with the Queensland Afghan Community Association (QACA) to co-design a series of workshops for community members to explore concepts related to wellbeing, mental health and mental illness, cultural perspectives of wellness, mental health stigma and barriers to accessing support. Participants discussed the impact of war, displacement and trauma on their communities and relationships and the serious impact on mental health, culminating in an exploration of interventions and support pathways and culturally supportive practices within the community.



We ran a series of information sessions and workshops to newly arrived Ukrainians providing psychoeducation about the impact of trauma on physical and mental health and various coping strategies. The workshops offered safe environments for participants to share their experiences, challenges and emotions and access mutual support, validation, understanding and practical advice from facilitators and peers.



Women’s Skill Share Group

QPASTT facilitates Women’s Skill Share and Social Groups, providing a safe environment for women from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to engage in a therapeutic group space and participate in skill sharing activities that support the recovery process.

In 2022/2023 we completed an internal evaluation of our Logan Women’s Skill Share Group using the World Health Organisation’s Wellbeing Index (WHO-5) scores and qualitative feedback through face-to-face interview with five program participants and the group facilitator.

Key themes which emerged from interviews with participants was that the group:

- Provided a space to develop a sense of belonging
- Helped to restore a feeling of safety
- Reduced isolation through social connection

WHO-5 outcome data was available from 25% of participants and showed a clinically significant improvement from initial responses and a follow up survey at four months.

Communities Healing to Thrive

The Communities Healing to Thrive (CHT) Program is a trauma informed pro-social leadership program designed to meet the unique intersect between cultural, community, leadership, trauma and mental health needs of community leaders and active community members from refugee and migrant backgrounds who support and resource their communities.

The goals of the CHT program are to increase community mental health literacy and resilience and reduce mental health stigma.

This year, 47 people from six communities participated in workshops co-designed to meet community needs and goals.

Therapeutic Art and Movement Groups

QPASTT harnessed the therapeutic benefits of movement and creative expression across a number of groups, offering art activities (including painting, sculpting and drawing), active mindfulness and techniques including yoga, meditation and breathwork.

Participants included people from Syria, Iran, Ukraine, Afghanistan and South Sudan, with many reporting a reduction in symptoms of anxiety and depression, the development of healthier coping mechanisms and a greater sense of control over their emotions.

Participants included people from Syria, Iran, Ukraine and Afghanistan and South Sudan, with many reporting a reduction in symptoms of anxiety and depression, the development of healthier coping mechanisms and a greater sense of control over their emotions.

Participant Feedback:

The group has been the only place I feel safe, to come here and talk to these ladies.

After I do yoga, I feel relaxed and more comfortable in my body and my brain. I feel my brain is empty of stress.

We like that she (the facilitator) is flexible and can adapt for our physical needs.



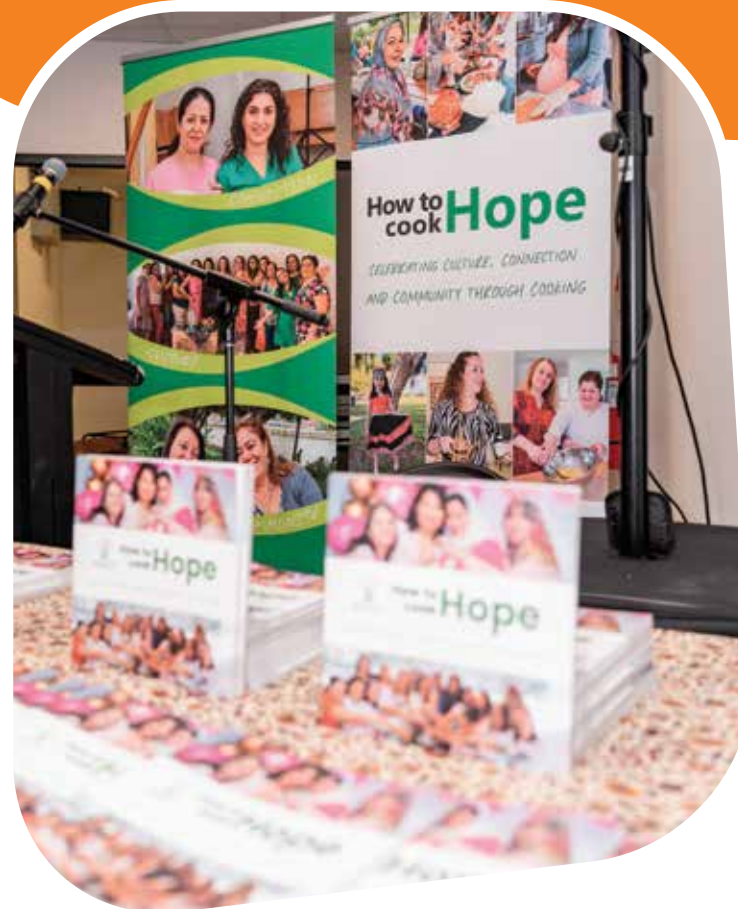
Launching *How to Cook Hope*

*In March 2023, QPASTT's Women's Skill Share Group and Women's Social Group launched their cookbook, **How to Cook Hope: celebrating culture, connection and community through cooking.***

The cookbook was an idea dreamed up by the group members as a way of sharing their cultures and treasured family recipes to give back to the community that has welcomed them into Queensland.

The cookbook was officially launched by Amber Manwaring, Director of Mental Health Strategy at Queensland Health, at an event attended by over hundred guests including 60 group members, their families, stakeholders, community members, volunteers, special guests and QPASTT board members.

You can purchase **How to Cook Hope** in print and digital versions from qpastt.org.au



Regions of Belonging

Opportunities for belonging and mutual support are particularly important for emerging communities in the regions. A highlight has been the coming together of participants from diverse communities around common interests and experiences.

Regional groups delivered by QPASTT in 2022/2023 included:

Men's Social and Wellbeing Group - Toowoomba

This social wellbeing group, delivered in collaboration with Multicultural Australia, seeks to improve men's social supports and wellbeing through activities and informal psychoeducation. The group meets fortnightly, enjoying fishing, outdoor activities, shared meals and conversations.

The men attending the group are primarily from the Êzidi community and have settled in Toowoomba within the last five years. In its second year, this group is growing through increased referrals from other services including aged care providers and NDIS support workers.



An independent qualitative program evaluation of our wellbeing programs in Toowoomba found they have resoundingly increased community participation amongst our client group and provided opportunities for participants to reduce their stress and apply stress management strategies in everyday life.



Women's Social Group - Toowoomba

This 8-week women's social group delivered in collaboration with Mercy Family Services, Toowoomba was designed to create a social environment for women requiring more intensive support to participate in a group and reduce their social isolation. Group activities centred around arts and crafts led by an art therapist which provided opportunities for group interactions and relaxation. Facilitators were able to support the participants to develop self-care strategies.

On client feedback and satisfaction reports, all women reported that their language and cultural needs were met, and they felt safe in the group. A survey of participants using the World Health Organisation's Wellbeing Index (WHO-5) recorded an overall improvement in the wellbeing of the participants.

Youth Groups (Cairns)

QPASTT delivers local youth groups for students and young people from refugee backgrounds to connect with their peers, share their concerns and issues and access support from QPASTT and other service providers.

Families in Cultural Transition (Cairns)

Families in Cultural Transition provides support to parents from refugee backgrounds to address participant-identified needs arising out of their settlement and transition to a new life in Australia.

Play to Connect (Cairns and Townsville)

Play to Connect is a play-based group for primary-school aged children, supporting them to develop emotional regulation skills and positive connections with their peers.



Youth Voice (Townsville)

Youth Voice Townsville is a committee of diverse young people (aged between 15-25) working together to identify and address social justice issues that affect young people and their communities.



Central African Republic Women's Group (Townsville)

This therapeutic group supports newly arrived women with participant-identified needs in relation to their settlement, mental health and wellbeing in Australia.

Thriving Mums and Thriving Families (Townsville)

Thriving Mums and Thriving Families uses a peer-led model of early intervention and prevention, collaborating with mothers from refugee backgrounds in Townsville West to increase their capacity, capability and confidence to access wellbeing supports for themselves and their families.

The group facilitates strong networks, connections and relationships to combat isolation and social stigma and foster a sense of inclusion, belonging and social support between program participants, refugee communities, the service sector and the broader Townsville community.

Girl Talk (Townsville)

Girl Talk is a social group which aims to provide a safe and supportive environment for girls to explore issues related to their health, wellbeing and relationships.



Family Fun Days

Our teams in Toowoomba, Cairns and Townsville host Family Fun Days in partnership with local sector stakeholders. The purpose of these events is to promote positive family experiences and provide newly arrived families with opportunities to increase their support networks with their peers and connect with local service providers.

In an independent evaluation of our Toowoomba programs, participants spoke very positively about the Family Fun Day, praising the venue, the happy and relaxed atmosphere and the opportunity to connect with QPASTT and other community members.

▲ Photo: Townsville Family Fun Day

▲ Cairns Family Fun Day

Community Consultation

This year, QPASTT engaged in more than 278 meetings and consultations with community and faith leaders, supporting them to identify local issues and improve their systemic advocacy skills to effectively put their messages and needs across three levels of government, the community services sector, and the private sector. The discussions also focused on building leaders' capacity to respond to both material and mental health and wellbeing needs of their communities. In addition to the meetings and consultations, QPASTT provided extensive support to representatives from a wide range of communities facilitating access to funding and supporting advocacy submissions on issues including immigration, political unrest overseas, community funding, safety and security, housing and employment.

Community and Faith Leaders' Dinners and Forums

In partnership with Multicultural Australia, QPASTT hosted three Community and Faith Leaders' Dinners and Forums across Brisbane and Logan, including a community consultation regarding housing and cost of living with Queensland's Treasurer, the Hon Cameron Dick, MP.

Over 230 community leaders, members, representatives and stakeholders attended these events, including people from Cairns, Townsville and Toowoomba connecting in remotely.

Topics of discussion also included enhancing mental health service provision for communities, incorporating cultural and community-led healing practices into services, reducing mental health stigma, easing access to community and acute mental health services, cost of living pressures, and the Queensland Budget.

Townsville Community and Faith Leaders' Network Forums

QPASTT's Townsville team hosted three Community and Faith Leaders' Network Forums, where community representatives are able to share their concerns about issues affecting community members and talk with stakeholder representatives about collaborative solutions.

This year, the leaders group advocated for their communities in the areas of housing, employment and study, family reunion and citizenship test requirements. In response, QPASTT was able to facilitate representatives from the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training, and the State Member of Parliament to speak to community leaders and address their concerns.

We also welcomed Dr Janine Gertz from the University of New South Wales to speak about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament.

Community leaders have acknowledged the important role QPASTT plays for the Network, and report seeing tangible changes occurring through the systemic advocacy achieved by the Network meetings and collaboration between attendees.



▲ Townsville Community/Faith Leaders' Network Forums

Our Response:

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 2022/2023...

QPASTT supported
540 children (<16 years) &
527 young people (16-25)
through individual counselling.



Building capacity to respond to trauma with C&K Community Kindergarten Durack

QPASTT partnered with C&K Community Kindergarten Durack to increase their capability to support families from refugee and migrant backgrounds and respond to trauma behaviours in children, including separation anxiety, difficulty regulating emotions, and problems forming relationships with peers beyond what might be expected as usual for the age group.

Working closely with the Kindy Director, we co-designed social and emotional wellbeing mornings for children and their parents. We offered emotional regulation and emotional literacy activities for children, inviting parents to learn more about the activities, their benefits and the emotional and wellbeing needs of children during the early years. C&K reported that they find it easier to start discussions with parents about mental health and how to seek support, like referring to QPASTT or other services, which will help ensure healthy social and emotional development of children and support positive transitions to school.

Building Stronger Families

Building Stronger Families is a 'train the trainer' program that aims to support communities to explore the strengths and values of their cultural approach to parenting, the norms and values around parenting in Australian culture and to identify strategies and skills they would like to apply to their parenting to enhance healthy family relationships and community connections. Nine Community Connectors from Brisbane and Toowoomba were trained to facilitate the delivery of Building Stronger Families to their respective communities, covering topics including:

- The refugee and settlement experience
- The impact of trauma
- Human rights in Australia
- Trauma informed practice, culture shock and culture conflict
- Managing family relationships in the Australian context
- QPASTT services available for families and communities

Participant Feedback:

"This opportunity helped us to cultivate a stronger sense of unity, empathy and understanding of settlement issues and parenting in new society."

Connected Parenting Pilot

From our work with Afghan evacuees following the 2021 crisis in Afghanistan, we identified many families with children aged under five years who may benefit from group support following their experience of displacement and resettlement.

We developed a pilot program to increase parent/carer confidence to recognise and respond to their children's emotional needs, increase their understanding of the impact of refugee trauma on parenting and children's wellbeing, and to support people to manage their own emotional needs in the context of parenting.

The program utilised some resources from the evidence-based Circle of Security parenting program which we complemented with psychoeducation about the neurobiology of trauma, the journey of resettlement and acculturation and their impact on parents and children, families and communities. This aimed to reduce fear and anxiety about why children might be behaving in a way that is causing difficulties, or why parenting may seem increasingly challenging even though a family has reached a safe country. We also provided parents with strategies to support their own mental health and trauma recovery.

Cultural safety was a key concern in the development of the program in order to facilitate deep discussions and sharing between group participants. Group participants were of a similar cultural background which enabled a deep exploration of cultural values, strengths and skills. We provided bicultural support workers and interpreters in sessions, with child minding available to facilitate attendance.

Adjustments to the pilot program were made to incorporate feedback from participants and in consultation with bicultural workers and Community Connector staff working in the Afghan Response Team. The pilot program is continuing to be refined and delivered in partnership with Community Hubs and we are planning an independent evaluation.

Participant Feedback:

"I have so many problems in my life. As a result, I always had something to worry about. Despite that these sessions helped to learn how to keep myself and my kids calm during critical situations."

"I understand that there is a reason and need behind every action and behaviour of a child and we must respond to it to the best of our ability."

Ucan2 and Support Skill and Connect

Ucan2 and Support Skill and Connect are integrated approaches to enhancing education and settlement, designed to work within existing education programs and settings like the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). The activities in both programs are designed to draw on migrant experiences and focus on building employability skills, psychosocial support, and developing participants' social connections.

This year, we delivered Ucan2 and Support Skill and Connect at Southbank TAFE to AMEP students aged between 17 and 23 years from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Thailand, Sri Lanka, China and the Philippines. We provided group work and individual client support including case work and referrals to service providers for educational and employment support.

Group work sessions focused on social connection, psychosocial education and employment skills, building on young people's strengths to address barriers to accessing educational and employment pathways. Sessions included guest speakers, mock job interviews and excursions.

QPASTT delivered the programs in collaboration with community volunteers, Multicultural Australia, Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS), and Queensland University of Technology (QUT).



We measure the impact of Ucan2 and Support Skill and Connect using the World Health Organisation's Wellbeing Index (WHO-5) and QPASTT's client feedback framework. Feedback from various terms throughout the year has included:

- 100% of respondents scoring the program 4/5 or 5/5 for overall program satisfaction
- 100% of respondents scoring the program a 5/5 for feeling respected and listened to by QPASTT staff and volunteers

Participant Feedback:

"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."

Next G

Next G is a youth initiative operating at different locations across Brisbane, Logan and Ipswich. It aims to create and foster safe spaces where young people are able to express themselves, have fun and form a sense of belonging, through exploring their personal identities, peer learning opportunities, and accessing support to fulfil their aspirations and create strong links throughout their local communities.

Feedback from a Next G student at Forest Lake State High School:

"A fantastic benefit of Next G is the opportunity to grow leadership skills. I never would've thought that I would take on a leadership position because I'm an introvert. But Next G is helping me and giving me the confidence to take risks and try new things."

School Outreach

Our Youth Enterprise and Engagement Team delivers weekly outreach at six schools across Southeast Queensland with significant enrolments of students from refugee backgrounds.

Our Youth Workers provide 1:1 support to students that includes incidental counselling, case management and psychosocial support focused on the needs, goals and aspirations of young people. Common areas where young people seek support is employment, education, family relationships, mental health and wellbeing, housing and homelessness and leadership skills development. Our staff provide advocacy support for young people and referrals into other services where appropriate.

We also run therapeutic and social groups onsite at schools including DRUMBEAT, social sport, girls' groups, and lunchtime hangouts, supporting young people to increase social connections with peers, teachers and school staff. We encourage school staff to participate in group activities to strengthen cultures of inclusion and connection within schools which support students' wellbeing and sense of belonging.

Feedback from Schools & Students:

"It was fun being able to share ideas and experiences in a safe space, create goals and learn about yourself."

"I recommend other schools to have the DRUMBEAT program at their school, it was fun and I enjoyed being out of my normal classes."

"The success of DRUMBEAT this year has been evident in the students' enthusiasm to be able to attend the course again. The course created a safe space for students to connect and discuss issues relevant to them and reflect on their views and behaviours. All groups have formed positive relationships with (the facilitator) and were able to feel seen and heard in their culture and life experiences. The teaching of the program encouraged them to view their actions and those of the people around them through a different lens. Students are now spreading the message about the program to other students within the school, creating a pipeline of students wishing to attend."

Youth Voice Brisbane

Youth Voice are a group of volunteers aged between 16-25 who actively work towards social justice, belonging and inclusion. Key areas of interest for the group this year were combating experiences of racism within the education system and advocacy around wellbeing and mental health for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Participant Feedback:

"Being part of Youth Voice has developed my confidence, increased my networks and allowed me to meet lots of different people who are involved in different things. I feel like I belong to something now, and I feel like I can help other young people through hard times."

Our Response:

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 has growing concern about communities from refugee backgrounds being able to equitably access the suite of supports necessary for their health, wellbeing and full community participation. Limitations in the trauma-informed and culturally responsive nature of services being offered across a range of areas is commonly being experienced by clients, including in NDIS access and interventions, family support, health and education. This can result in inadequate responses to client's needs by services and client disengagement, which can jeopardise their health and wellbeing.

10% of QPASTT clients, including people seeking asylum, experience homelessness or are at risk of homelessness and this was a significant focus of our advocacy to government.

QPASTT's systemic advocacy aims to amplify the voices of survivors, including people seeking asylum, and influence policy and practice.

In October,

we prepared a submission to the Queensland Housing Summit. We presented data collected by our frontline staff which revealed a significant experience of homelessness within our client group and outlined the importance of secure housing for recovery.

In November,

we prepared a submission to the Queensland Youth Strategy Consultation, highlighting the voices of young people we work with who describe frequent experiences of racism and discrimination and their desire to be empowered to pursue their aspirations and participate in decision-making.

In June,

we prepared a submission to the National Children's Commissioner's Investigation into Youth Justice and Child Wellbeing, highlighting how the experience of trauma, including intergenerational trauma, on young people can contribute to their engagement with the youth justice system.

In February,

we prepared a submission to the Joint Standing Committee Inquiry into the Role of Permanent Migration in Nation Building. Our submission highlighted the barriers to accessing citizenship experienced by members of the communities we work with, particularly the citizenship test requirements.

In March,

we also prepared a submission to the NDIS Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD) Strategy, highlighting the challenges faced by many people from diverse language or cultural backgrounds from accessing the NDIS and their experiences of diminished outcomes due to a lack of culturally responsive, trauma informed care from service providers.

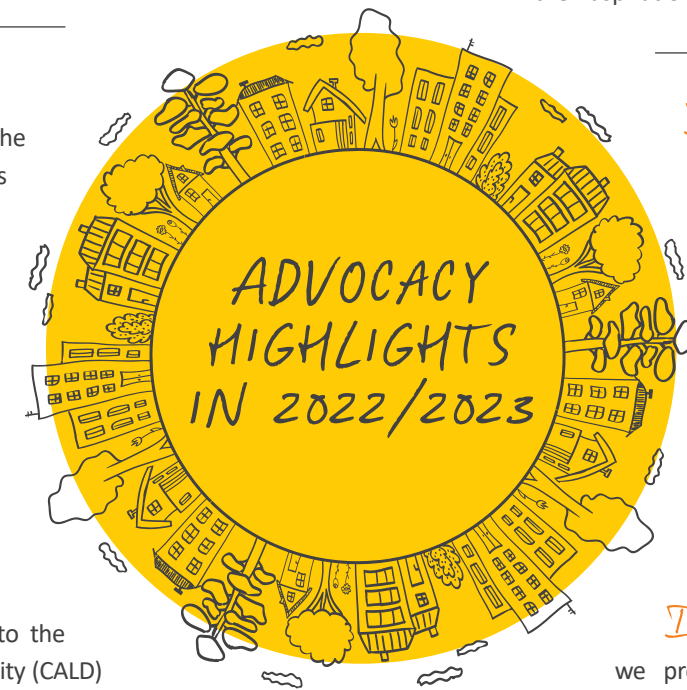
In March,

we prepared a submission to the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program (Inclusion Round) Program Design Discussion Paper. The program will fund new safe places to assist victim survivors leaving family and domestic violence and focus on improving access to appropriate emergency accommodation for First Nations women and children, women and children with disability and women and children from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Together, with Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS), in June we prepared a joint submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security's review of Schedule 1 of the Migration Amendment (Clarifying International Obligations for Removal) Act 2021 (CIOR Act). We recommended additional safeguards against the serious encroachment of individual rights imposed by indefinite detention.

We also provided feedback to the Reform of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and contributed to the Queensland Alliance for Mental Health submission to the Draft National Strategy on Stigma and Discrimination Reduction.

▶ [Read our Briefs and Submissions at qpastt.org.au/advocacy](https://qpastt.org.au/advocacy)



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 2022/2023 QPASTT commenced or continued the following research and consultation projects:

The Queensland Mental Health Commission (QMHC) commissioned Griffith University to complete a review of peoples' experience of the community mental health system. QPASTT worked closely with the research team to identify and engage leaders within cultural communities to ensure that their experience and voices were included.

We participated in an advisory committee for a research project exploring access and use of e-mental health for people from queer identifying, culturally diverse backgrounds. We supported the design of the interviews and outreach to individuals, practitioners, and mental health services. This project is a valuable exploration of digital inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community in e-mental health platforms which are becoming increasingly popular.

We joined with other Forum of Australian Services to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT) agencies to support the promotion of a Delphi study exploring understanding of mental health priorities of queer asylum seekers.

We continued our participation in *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 the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) School of Psychology and Counselling.

We continued our participation in *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. The findings of this project will be shared at the 3rd Australian Refugee Trauma Recovery in Resettlement Conference in Adelaide in October.

We continued our participation in *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 the reversal of the current upward trends in rates of suicide, self-harm and mental health disorders in children and young people.

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.

At our commemoration event this year, our staff heard from QPASTT Board Director Adele Rice AM about the different stages of refugee settlement in Queensland since the 1970s and the emergence of local trauma-informed services to support people with an experience of torture or refugee trauma. We also heard from Dariia Nechytailo about her life in occupied Ukraine and how that experience continues to impact her as she builds a life here in Australia.

Our staff shared 'The Global Reading,' - a statement of solidarity recited on this day around the world in support of those who have experienced torture.



▲ QPASTT Co-CEOs Sally Stewart (left) and Liz Gordon (right) with QPASTT Director Adele Rice AM

As our Co-CEO Liz Gordon reflected, "torture is an act that is never far away from any of us in time or location. And torture doesn't impact one person; it affects us all. But so do daily acts of resistance, from fights for justice and human rights to small acts of kindness and support, and most importantly, elevating the voices of survivors."



People, Culture and Governance

Accreditation under the National Standards for Mental Health Services

In 2022/2023, QPASTT underwent accreditation against the National Standards for Mental Health Services. The accreditation cycle occurs every three years and represents an independent recognition that QPASTT is compliant with all National Standards. Accreditation provides quality and performance assurance for clients, communities, funding bodies and the other agencies and groups we work with.

The accreditation process culminated in an onsite assessment visit which occurred across four days and three locations in October 2022, with QPASTT receiving commendations across many areas which focused on our commitment to program co-design, listening to the voice of the community, working with authenticity, and prioritising collaboration.

QPASTT's values, vision and message of hope were seen to demonstrate our deep commitment to our clients, the communities we work in and the quality of the services we deliver. The excellent feedback that QPASTT received across the accreditation process only serves to deepen our commitment to continuously improving our services.



Our People

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

Patron

Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM
Governor of Queensland

Board

Professor Emerita Keithia Wilson
Chair

Dr Ian Mannion
Director

Robin Lonergan
Director

Dr Pamela Douglas
Director

Raziq Qasimi
Director

Dr Ignacio Correa-Velez
Director

Adele Rice AM
Director

Kerrin Benson AM
Director

Fraser Power
Director

QPASTT is a team of **132** staff from over **44** different countries, speaking **44** languages. **72%** of our staff are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and **29%** have lived refugee experience.

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

Leadership Team in 2022/2023

Jamila Padhee
CEO (until January 2023)

Liz Gordon
Co-CEO for Practice Leadership and Service Delivery

Sally Stewart
Co-CEO for Partnerships and Opportunity Development

Angela Ng
Chief Financial Officer

Amy Burkett
Senior Leader, Clinical Services

Tanya Van Bael
Senior Leader, Individual and Family Recovery

Fernanda Torresi
Senior Leader, Group and Community-based Recovery

Beny Bol OAM
Senior Leader, Youth Engagement and Community Partnerships

Niyati Acharya
Senior Leader, People and Systems

Vickie Pastellas
Senior Leader, Capability and Governance

Elham Rezaei
Clinical Supervisor

Erica Fernandez
HEAL Co-Manager

Jo-Ann Cochran
Team Leader, Counselling Services (Moringa)

Julie Huysman
Team Leader, Counselling Services (Moringa)

Kani Kenyi
Co-Team Leader, Youth Enterprise and Innovation

Katie Artiss
Co-ordinator, Afghan Response Team

Meredith Hands
Co-Team Leader, Youth Enterprise and Innovation

Meriam Aman
Team Leader, Community Development and Capacity Building

Natalie Youssef
Team Leader, North Queensland

Noemie Rigaud
Team Leader, Intake and Connect

Prathiba Subramaniam
Team Leader, Toowoomba

Rosalind Dunne
Clinical Supervisor

Ruth Power
Team Leader, Toowoomba

Sarah Pember
Communications Advisor

Sarah Verdin
Clinical Supervisor

Stephanie Long
Team Leader, Training, Advocacy and Research

Susannah Tipping
Team Leader, Counselling Services (Oak)

Taryn McBurney
Team Leader, Children and Youth Counselling

Vedrana Jovcic
Team Leader, Logan and Gold Coast

Our Commitment to Quality Practice and Development

Ensuring quality and care through Clinical Supervision

QPASTT has embedded Clinical Supervision within our organisation since 2005. This commitment was taken to ensure our staff are supported to provide the best possible service to our clients while minimising the impact of vicarious trauma and burnout.

In addition to individual supervision, our team of clinical supervisors provide significant ad hoc supervision and support to staff and managers, contribute to external client reports, develop and oversee our clinical induction processes, contribute to staff probation and annual review processes, and are members of QPASTT's leadership team. This year, as part of our accreditation process against the National Standards for Mental Health, our team delivered all-staff training on code of conduct and important changes to failure to report legislation, as well as ensuring all our processes and practices were aligned with the National Standards. Our team has also developed online learning modules designed to make clinical induction more accessible and interactive to support the orientation of new staff members to QPASTT's trauma recovery model.

Our Professional Supervision Team is contracted to provide external supervision to counselling staff at The Phoenix Centre, our sister agency in Tasmania. In 2022/2023 the team engaged in a pilot program of providing external group supervision to Multicultural Australia, enhancing the trauma-informed practice capacity of staff working in their Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors program.

Meet *Ros*, one of QPASTT's Clinical Supervisors

"In supervision, you apply the principles of a trauma-informed approach – safety, trust, choice, collaboration, respect – to our relationship with the practitioner supervisee. We offer support that sits outside of a line management structure, with agreed boundaries of confidentiality, so a practitioner ideally can bring their whole self to reflect on their work, including talking about things they might be struggling with.

As a supervisor I aim to be reflective, grounded, predictable and consistent, and able to help people to regulate their emotions and experiences if they need that support to help remain present in their work with clients, families and communities. Once that trusting relationship has been developed, supervision can offer a shared responsibility for client care and ethical decision making, as well as a shared joy for insights and breakthroughs in a person's professional practice or their client's healing. I'm privileged to hear the breadth of the work that goes on at QPASTT, which is invigorating.

Many organisations will pay for their practitioners to attend external supervision, but a benefit of QPASTT having it in-house is the supervisors' extensive understanding of the work of the organisation. Our Professional Supervision Team can see patterns and themes emerging for staff and their work with clients and communities and identify needs for training and professional development or where our organisational practices and policies might need to be changed or strengthened.

Our approach to supervision is based on reflective practice which makes room for diversity and difference. A reflective practice approach makes space for people to reflect no matter what their role is, and no matter what theories or modalities are informing their practice. We support staff to utilise and implement evidence and practice-based trauma focused interventions, regardless of whether they are working with individual clients, families, groups or communities.

Read more on our website, qpastt.org.au/news

IN 2022/2023, our Professional Supervision Team delivered **743** individual supervision sessions to **55** staff members, supporting their wellbeing, professional practice and development and ensuring QPASTT's clinical services are safe and culturally appropriate for trauma recovery.

Reflections on Supervision –

Rima

"My experience with supervision at QPASTT is very positive. I know I can speak honestly, and my supervisor will give me real feedback - that's particularly helpful when I might be grappling with a decision on the best way to support a client. Knowing that this professional support was available helped me to increase self-awareness in relation to my practice and build my confidence in my work.

My relationship with my supervisor is one of mutuality – we both need to be honest. We can both provide feedback. We both need to reflect.

I can share my successes too. I share the positive feedback I get from clients, which helps my supervisor deepen her understanding of my approach to my practice and strengthens the feedback she can offer me.

It is valuable to have this supervision relationship at QPASTT, one outside of a hierarchal manager/staff relationship where power imbalances might prevent someone's ability to fully disclose if they are struggling with aspects of their work.

As a practitioner with lived experience, I appreciate the respect for my knowledge and my approach to client practice that my supervisor affords me. She is very respectful, flexible and open to different ways of working and I appreciate that."

Reflections on Supervision –

Kathryn

"As a practitioner, you can get very close to this work, so having access to a highly skilled person who can provide a more global view is incredibly helpful.

Supervision at QPASTT is a very safe, nonjudgmental space. My relationship with my supervisor includes a great sense of rapport and engagement and very clear boundaries. I feel I can be open and honest which only encourages growth."



Offline Weeks

QPASTT's Offline Weeks are triannual events where our staff can focus on professional development and team building, replenishing and refreshing themselves and their practice.

In 2022/2023, our Offline Weeks included:

- Code of Conduct training.
- Cultural community and lived experience presentations.
- Client, Community and Stakeholder Feedback.
- Domestic and Family Violence presentations from Women's Legal Service and Immigrant Women's Support Service.
- Exploring the Uluru Statement from the Heart and proposed referendum on the Voice to Parliament.
- Team-building activities facilitated by La Boite Theatre, fostering connection and cross team collaboration with our staff from across Queensland.



BRISBANE

P: 07 3391 6677

Brisbane Multicultural Centre
28 Dibley Street,
Woolloongabba, QLD 4102

LOGAN

P: 07 3089 4310

19/390 Kingston Road,
Slacks Creek, QLD 4127

TOOWOOMBA

P: 07 4573 4391

Toowoomba Multicultural Centre
15 Snell Street (cnr Russell Street),
Toowoomba, QLD 4350

TOWNSVILLE

P: 07 4772 9000

410 Ross River Road,
Cranbrook, QLD 4814

CAIRNS

P: 0481 965 551

212 McCormack St,
Manunda, QLD 4870

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