



# Welcome to our Annual Report

This annual report marks the third year of the Queensland Community Alliance and my second year as one of co-chairs of the Alliance, alongside Gerry Weatherall.

This year has been an active one for the Alliance. We have deepened our commitment to the organising cycle and strengthened the connections between partner organisations. We welcomed Health Consumers Queensland as a new partner organisation. They join our 26 existing partners, whose ongoing commitment reflects our collective strength. Seventy-seven parishioners, union and community members have attended leadership training on the foundations of community organising, deepening our shared understanding of organising.

Our organising cycles throughout south-east Queensland have achieved impressive results. Following our Ipswich Assembly and after extensive work with the West Moreton Hospital and Health Service, we secured \$270,000 in funding that will be dedicated to addressing mental health issues in the Ipswich region. Similarly, our listening exercises in Stafford and surrounding suburbs told us that the cost of hospital parking is dramatically impacting the local community in Brisbane's north. The Alliance has already started pressuring decision-makers about this, and received commitments to find a solution.

In Logan, we won the support of the new Mayor and Council for public transport, both with an unprecedented \$1,000,000 dollar funding commitment, and working on an integrated transport plan. We have also continued to work in partnership with Logan Together around the outcomes for kids aged 0-8, including the proposed establishment of new community-based maternity services.

Working with MDA Ltd's Migrant Youth Vision Project, our interns have formed their own organising cycle, focusing on the barriers youth face in securing gainful employment. The Alliance has stood 'as one' to protect Baby Asha as we advocate for humane, respectful and welcoming treatment of refugees. We have also campaigned to protect penalty rates and the sanctity of weekends, and started a discussion about the impacts of consumer-directed health care on consumers and providers.

Finally, this year, we saw the successful conclusion of our work around asylum seeker transport concessions, with funding passed in the 2016 Queensland Budget, and we look forward to the concessions being rolled out in 2017.

We continue to build the strength of our Alliance from the relationships we form with each other. Our relationships give us the strength to be recognised as key players, to support each other when faced with challenges, to reclaim civil society's power, and to protect our communities from harm.

*Mitra Khakbaz*

Co-Chair of the Queensland Community Alliance

# What is the Queensland Community Alliance?

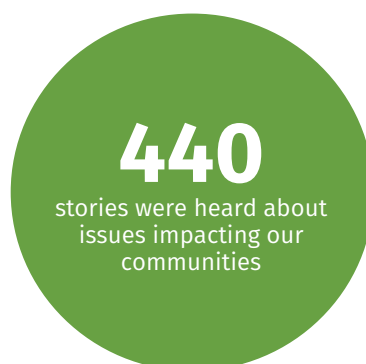
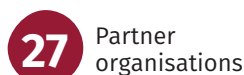
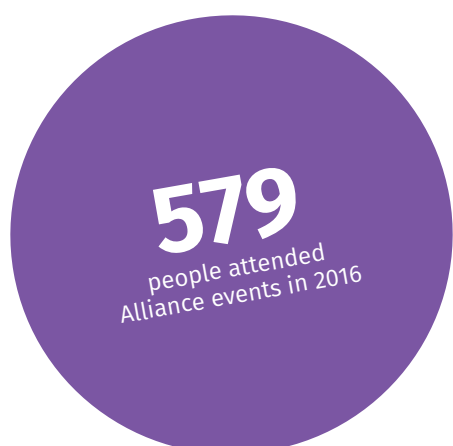
We are an alliance of faith groups, charities, unions, neighbourhood centres, community organisations and ethnic associations working together for the common good.

This alliance is built on the relationships we are building across organisations in our local area. We identify and train people to become leaders in community organising, and decide our priorities for action together, through a process of listening to stories of pressures that our members face and witness.

Our alliance draws on the community organising tradition of the United States, and it is linked with the Sydney Alliance. The core elements of our alliance are:

- Non-partisan. Holding politicians of all parties to their responsibility to serve the community.
- Adhering to the rule of organising never to do for others what they can do for themselves.
- We will work in partnership to solve the problems we face together.
- A commitment to listening to the voice of the excluded, and partnership with the most vulnerable in our community.
- Self-funding. This alliance will be funded out of the dues of member organisations, contributing according to their size and capacity.
- Working only on issues that make our alliance stronger. This alliance will not work on issues which bring core values of our partners into tension. Instead, we seek to address the tension that exists between our shared values, and what we witness in the world.

## Our figures at a glance:



# Our organisations

Amnesty International Australia

Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane

Churches of Christ in Queensland

Edmund Rice Oceania

Electrical Trades Union

Ethiopian Community Association

Health Consumers Queensland

Independent Education Union Q&NT

Ipswich City Uniting Church / Glebe Rd  
Uniting Church

Logan Anglican Church

Logan Community Group Alliance

Micah Projects

MDA Ltd

Presentation Sisters

Queensland Council of Unions

Queensland Nurses' Union

Queensland Teachers' Union

Rail, Tram and Bus Union

St Mary's in Exile

Stafford Uniting Church

The Services Union

Together, the union

United Voice

Uniting Church Bremer Presbytery

Uniting Church Moreton Rivers Presbytery

Uniting Church South Moreton Presbytery

Uniting Church Synod

# Our people

## Our board

**Gerry Weatherall**, Chief Mission Development Officer, Churches of Christ in Qld  
(resigned 23 November)

**Mitra Khakbaz**, Executive Manager, MDA Ltd

**Rev Beth Nicholls**, Project Officer - Mission, South Moreton Presbytery of the Uniting Church

**Fr David Pascoe**, Dean of St Stephens Cathedral, Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane

**Beth Mohle**, Secretary, Queensland Nurses Union

**Sheila Hunter**, Queensland Branch Assistant Secretary, United Voice

## Board meetings

### 24 February 2016

Attendance David Copeman, Sheila Hunter, Mitra Khakbaz, Beth Mohle, David Pascoe, Gerry Weatherall, Beth Nicholls

### 27 April 2016

Attendance David Copeman, Sheila Hunter, Mitra Khakbaz, Beth Mohle, Gerry Weatherall, Beth Nicholls  
*Apologies: David Pascoe*

### 31 August 2016

Attendance David Copeman, Sheila Hunter, Mitra Khakbaz, Beth Mohle, David Pascoe, Gerry Weatherall  
*Apologies: Beth Nicholls*

### 23 November 2016

Attendance David Copeman, Sheila Hunter, Mitra Khakbaz, Beth Mohle  
*Apologies: Beth Nicholls, David Pascoe, Gerry Weatherall*

# Our shared values

## Members of the Queensland Community Alliance share the following values:

### Fairness

- We are committed to a fair and just society, redistributing power and giving a voice to those who would be powerless and voiceless without the strength of collective action.

*Democratic structures and institutions in our society support fairer outcomes and enhance our capacity to share the wealth of our nation more equitably. All people have the potential to speak and act with others on their own behalf, to grow and develop as leaders and to participate fully in our democracy.*

### Equality

- We believe all people should be treated equally and have the same rights under the law.

*If we are to continue to improve the quality of life for all Queenslanders, unions, faith and community groups that make up civil society each have a role to play to address inequality. Particular attention must be paid to addressing growing inequality in our society, especially the disadvantage suffered by Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander people.*

### Health, wholeness & opportunity

- We seek to improve the quality of life for all Queenslanders and recognise that equality of opportunity is a core element of an egalitarian society.

*Universal health care, progressive and equitable education, a fair industrial relations system coupled with access to safe, secure and meaningful work all contribute to our dignity and social cohesion.*

### Safety

- We strive to ensure our society is free from harassment, intimidation and violence. Respecting difference is central to acknowledging the dignity and inherent worth of all individuals.



# Our shared values

## Collaboration

- We recognise that we are stronger if we work together, guided by our common purpose and values. We are committed to building capacity and leadership both within our organisations and through developing strong relationships between Alliance members.

## Sustainability

- We recognise the sanctity of the natural world and are committed to operating in a sustainable manner. We act as stewards who have received the earth and its natural resources as a gift from past generations, to tend and care for and protect it for future generations. The earth and its resources are not ours to own but rather to hold in trust. ■



# Our staff

## Dave Copeman

Dave Copeman is the Lead Organiser of the Queensland Community Alliance. He has previously worked as a human rights campaigner for Amnesty International in Queensland and East Africa, and was first inspired to work on human rights after volunteering with the Movement for Democratic Change, the political opposition in Zimbabwe, in 2002-2004.

Dave has also dabbled in trade union campaigning and worked for the Queensland government, an experience that only reinforced his belief that communities need to organise around their common interests through mechanisms other than just electoral politics.

## Devett Kennedy (nee O'Brien)

Devett Kennedy is an organiser with the Queensland Community Alliance, focusing on the Logan area. He is the former International Secretary-General of the Young Catholic Students movement, after first joining Young Christian Students as a high school student. In this role he worked with over 3.5 million members running global campaigns and leadership development programs.

Devett also has experience as a union organiser working with Together. In 2011 Devett was State Coordinator of the Say Yes campaign, organising unions, community organisations and environmental groups to support a price on carbon.

## Beccy Congram

Beccy Congram is the Administrative & Communications Coordinator for the Queensland Community Alliance. Beccy first connected with the Queensland Community Alliance as a Social Work Intern in 2014. After graduating from the Alliance Internship program and the University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Social Work, Beccy took on a role as a Marketing Coordinator for a professional firm for 18 months before returning to her roots with the Alliance in late 2016.

Additional prior experience includes provision of administrative services to Native Title groups, coordinating events throughout rural Queensland, and completion of a Social Work Internship with the Royal Brisbane Hospital.



# Our interns

This year, the Queensland Community Alliance partnered with Migrant Youth Vision Project (MYVP) to provide internships to young people keen to learn community organising and utilise their skills to organise around the pressure of youth unemployment.

Together with MDA Ltd, Queensland African Communities Council, Islamic Council of Queensland, Welcome to Australia and QPASTT, the Alliance are working with MYVP to organise for employment opportunities to people aged 15-24 years, particularly those from refugee or migrant backgrounds.

As a part of this program, in June 2016, Rosie Harper-Pittam, Anisa Nandaula and Sebit Rambang commenced their internships with the Alliance, beginning their journey as community organising interns.

The interns participated in 2 day Foundations of Community Organising training and later attended 6 day National Community Organising training in Sydney.

They learned the art of relational organising, and through their organising around the issue of youth unemployment, experienced the power of collective action.

Running their own series of table talks, Rosie, Anisa and Sebit brought together more than 80 young people and collected powerful stories around the issue of youth unemployment.

It was these stories and the research action that followed which led into a powerful Assembly in Stafford that saw the completion of their organising cycle where commitments were secured by significant employers like Queensland Police Service and Metro North Hospital & Health Service to work together on the issue.

# Our activities

It has been a busy year for the Queensland Community Alliance. This year started with a whole lot of energy, and has continued at a fast pace.

The first big activity of the year was on 27 January, when more than 100 people attended our ReActivate Ipswich forum with Marcus Westbury. Marcus gave an inspiring message of how the ReNew Newcastle program works, and we had council officers and councillors react to the story and the energy.

Next was the **Lady Cilento vigil for Baby “Asha”**. In 2015, Alliance leaders had a strategy retreat, and discussed working around a focus on Welcoming asylum seekers, refugees and insecure workers. As part of this strategizing, we had all agreed that if there was a child facing return to detention from a hospital and the health professionals were refusing to discharge, then we would all take collective action.

On 12 February 2016, this is what happened, and so Alliance partners acted. Called to action by Ros McLellan, General Secretary of Queensland Council of Unions, union members staffed the vigil, coordinated volunteers, and turned out 600 people for a union rally on Monday 15 Feb. The churches, led by members of Love Makes a Way, organised an ecumenical service in solidarity on Wednesday 17, and the schools, led by Edmund Rice Oceania, organised a student action of more than 400 on Thursday 18. Also integral to the success of the vigil were Getup! and non-Alliance refugee organisations.

This sustained rolling pressure over 11 days resulted in Baby “Asha” being released into the community, and progressively the 267 asylum seekers being released into community detention, where almost all remain.

This action was a powerful example of Alliance partners organising together and living out our values. It also demonstrated that the trust we built allowed us to engage in the risky and uncertain step of sustaining a 24-hour vigil, and maintaining these relationships in the face of pressure and concern. The effect of this was a victory and a non-violent direct action of incredible sophistication and success.

During this period of action, we also held the **Ipswich Assembly**, where more than 200 people filled Ipswich City Uniting Church, on a ridiculously hot night. Ipswich Mayor Paul Pisasale gave us an in-principle commitment to Reactivate Ipswich City centre, and 12 mental health organisations, led by West Moreton Health and Hospital Service CEO Sue McKee, committed to initiate a collective impact project to improve mental health services.

# Our activities

From Ipswich we moved focus to Logan, and 210 people came together at Woodridge State High School hall on 10 March to hear real commitments around action on public transport for Logan. Thanks to the work of our Alliance-led transport working party, the State Government committed to a demand-responsive transport solution, and both the Government and council committed to an **Integrated Transport Plan**. The four Logan Mayoral candidates all committed to council funding public transport services for the first time ever. Each committed at least \$1,000,000 per year for 4 years. We also made commitments with Alliance partners to come together around neighbourhood centres to explore local action to improve things for Logan kids.

On Sunday 13 May, the Alliance worked with GetUp! and the Australian Church Refugee Taskforce to deliver non-violent direct action training to **defend Sanctuary** to more than 190 people at St John's Cathedral.

In April, we kept the pressure on for a **revitalised Ipswich CBD**, with 40 people attending a Reactivate Ipswich community planning evening.

Alliance leaders also came together in April at a **Time for Family and Community Roundtable**, where we agreed to hold three Save our Weekend public forums in June around the pressures on families and community members from the 24/7 economy and the threat to weekend penalty rates.

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# Our activities

These **Save our Weekend** actions worked! More than 90 people in Brisbane CBD at St John's Anglican Cathedral, 70 in Bracken Ridge and 103 in Beenleigh demanded that MPs and candidates to make the commitment to work to Save Our Weekend and keep Sunday special. We were successful in raising the issue and receiving commitments from LNP, Labor and Green candidates and Members of Parliament, including re-elected MPs Luke Howarth and Bert van Manen.

In June we also held Logan City Council to Mayor Luke Smith's promise at our Assembly, with more than 60 Alliance leaders packing Logan City Council on Monday 27 June to support the passage of the Council Budget including the public transport funding.

June also saw the Queensland Budget, which included funding for transport concessions for asylum seekers, an essential act of assistance to some of the most in need in our community that occurred thanks to Alliance advocacy lead by Kerrin Benson, Fr David Pascoe and Owen Doogan to Deputy Premier Jackie Trad.

In July, 11 Alliance leaders travelled to Sydney to attend **National Training** with the Sydney Alliance.

In the second half this year, our organising has been focused on the issues of youth unemployment, working with partner organisations in the **Migrant Youth Vision Project**. More than 80 people attended a listening process around the pressures of youth unemployment.

The other focus of our organising has been around the Stafford/Chermside district of the Alliance, where at a discernment meeting in August, more than 45 people decided to work on the issue of the cost of **hospital parking**.

Organising quickly, a team from the local churches, local union members and leaders from the migrant communities came together to organise our Spring Assembly on 17 November, with 200 members of Alliance partners coming together to win commitments on employment and hospital parking from the Metro North Health and Hospital Service.

Fr Denis Scanlan also called for a ramp up of pressure on Metro Parking Pty Ltd, the private provider that owns and runs the car park at The Prince Charles Hospital, and attendees responded, resulting in 25 people taking action on Saturday 19 November and another 17 on Monday 21 November.

Finally, in the last few weeks, 24 members of Alliance partners attended the Beenleigh/Logan

# Our activities

**Ice summit**, where there was commitment to collective action to reduce the harm that this drug inflicts on the local community, and more than 40 people attended a policy forum on Increasing Choice Across Human Services, together with members of Queensland Council of Social Service and the Queensland Community Service Industry Alliance.

Alongside this public work, we are continuing to build the relational power which is at the heart of this Alliance. That has involved a year-long program of training 77 leaders through our 2 day **Foundations of Community Organising Training**. There has also been an intensive period of deepening the involvement within member organisations, led by organisational leaders in the second half of the year. With more people practising the basics of community organising, we are confident that this will fuel powerful actions throughout 2017. ■

# Our affiliations

The Queensland Community Alliance together with the Sydney Alliance is affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF).

This year, Sr Maribeth Larkin and Joe Chrastil from the IAF have played a prominent role in supporting the Queensland Community Alliance through their mentoring and support. We also wish to thank veteran community organiser Rev Willie Bennett for his role as lead trainer at National training.

David Barrow, Liuanga Palu, Mansour Flaihan and the other organisers and leaders of the Sydney Alliance have played a key role in sharing the experience and learnings from adapting this work to an Australian context, and blazing a path that we look to follow.



# Our training

## *Foundations of community organising training*

The two day Foundations of community organising training is one of the key activities of our Alliance in our period of formation. Since August 2013, 387 people have completed this training over 19 separate trainings.

Each training has involved 15-30 leaders (ideally) from a mix of our partner organisations. Individuals from these organisations also play a key role in delivering the training, as trainers and small group leaders.

Attendees learn why we believe we need a broad-based community organising alliance in Queensland, and how they can use the practical tools of relational organising, including one-on-one and table talks to strengthen their organisations and bring the values of their organisation into the world.

### **Two day trainings:**

Date	Location	No. of attendees
14-15 April 2016	The Spot, Parkinson	25
21-22 June 2016	St Paul's Uniting Church, Stafford	14
15-16 October 2016	Beenleigh Region Uniting Church	15
26-27 October 2016	Queensland Nurses Union, West End	23

## *National six day training*

The Queensland Community Alliance sent 11 leaders to Sydney to attend National training in July this year. The 6 Day National Training is a program for people committed to understanding the craft of community organising—who want to play a key role in leading the activities of the Alliance inside their organisation and acting as a bridge between our member organisations.

This residential course builds a close community of leaders across participating civil society organisations that represent the diversity our communities in Sydney and Queensland. Leaders are equipped with the tools they need to be more strategic and effective and to build and strengthen their organisations in the process. The course focuses on power, organisations, relationships and leadership.

National Training is led by a lead trainer from the UK or US, generally an organiser of 20+ years' experience in community organising. Attendees from Queensland have included Catholic clergy and religious, Uniting Church and Anglican ministers, Union leaders and delegates, senior community organisation leaders and community organising staff and interns. ■

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[www.qldcommunityalliance.org](http://www.qldcommunityalliance.org)