

YWCA Queensland

Targeted disadvantage group/demographic

- Young unemployed women
- Mature aged unemployed or underemployed women
- Women re-entering the workforce
- Women with a disability
- Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

I Overview

YWCA QUEENSLAND, a women's organisation founded in 1888, work to empower women and girls from three cornerstones of empowerment: safety and wellbeing, economic participation and leadership and has long standing and strong links within the Toowoomba and broader Queensland community. As a not for profit organisation for women, and through the fellowship of women, our primary focus is on achieving sustainable, quality based outcomes across the breadth of local community engagement and social programs, including safe housing, skills development, primary prevention, guidance and advocacy work.

Our initiatives include:

Community housing services

Safe housing options for women in need through delivery of our community housing services. One in three women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by someone that is known to them. In many circumstances, women and children become homeless due to escaping domestic and family violence. YWCA QUEENSLAND has an extensive and proud history of providing housing and accommodation for women and their families.

Our affordable and secure accommodation services have allowed us to support the local community for more than 125 years through the provision of emergency housing and other long and short term accommodation. Our tenancy program works with people to maintain their tenancies and from that stable foundation develop their own plan to find their possible. YWCA QUEENSLAND are the only organisation in Toowoomba to offer single accommodation for women and demand for this service continues to grow.

Y Ability services

Achieving greater independence for women, and men with a disability supporting them to participate more broadly within the community as part of our Y Ability services under the NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) program. YWCA offers disability services to both women and men. Our services include assistance for independent living, activity support and respite care. Most of our clients have funded plans through NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS). We work with more than thirty clients across each cohort offering a range of support functions in their home and through other community activities including a recreational program on site at our Toowoomba headquarters.

Delivering learning and employment pathways

Building individual capabilities and developing life and employment skills for women to feel more confident to contribute and build financial security through our training and development programs including those funded through Queensland Government's Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. Our programs aim to develop resilience, confidence and self-agency, to empower individual women to make choices to achieve the life they want. We understand that due to structural, cultural and economic inequalities women experience a range of types of disadvantage. We aspire to provide a 'hand up', the platform of a safe environment, the support, the connections, the education, the coaching, the belief, the opportunities and especially a voice to achieve their goals. Collaboration with other key community organisations has been key to our success, securing a network of services to provide for complex needs as well as building critical social and community connections for the future. We have also benefited from a strong training provider partnership with TAFE QUEENSLAND.

Criterion 1 : Leading community-based, employment outcome focused services and support

YWCA QUEENSLAND has an established network of partners (eg training providers, local business and sponsorship, and local and state government) across the Toowoomba community to achieve our common goals. We have taken the lead on a number of initiatives specific to achieving improvements in people's lives through access to housing, training and employment opportunities and to connect them within their local community, with a particular emphasis on women providing a pathway to help women, and men, to find their possible through the Giving a Hand program over the past 2 years.

Fifty two women have participated in the Skilling Queenslanders for Work Initiative with YWCA. Twenty-six of these participants have been in the Giving a Hand program. The women selected for the program have been drawn from a diverse cultural and linguistic background including Australian citizens, Permanent residents of Australia living in Queensland, New Zealand citizens permanently residing in Queensland, Refugee and Humanitarian Visa Holders living in Queensland and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. We have selected a broad age group, including mature age and have women with a disability participating in the program, ensuring that the program is accessible to those in genuine need and who are in a position to fully participate.

The program is entirely referral based and the aim is to assist disadvantaged women to gain skills and qualifications to enter or re-enter the workforce, often after a significant break in their employment history. YWCA Queensland are at the forefront of empowering women and girls to find their possible.

We have created a unique employment pathway opportunity through the Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) program by having the ability to offer our female Housing clients a placement on the program to take the next step in building a pathway to a brighter future. Other participants are selected through an interview process having been identified with significant personal barriers to achieving their independence. Many participants in the Giving a Hand program with YWCA Queensland will attest that the program has been life changing.

YWCA Queensland has been fortunate to have received funding under the SQW initiatives over the past two years.

In our first year we achieved significant, and sustained employment, and/or other training outcomes as a result of the trainees participating in the program. Our success was based on a structured program focused on shaping capabilities to match the local community and the very competitive employment market.

Each year we have structured our traineeship program around the theme of 'Giving a Hand' which has been centred around our Y Hand Up program which provides practical measures to support women to rebuild their lives after escaping from domestic and family violence (DFV) or who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. The participants on the program have been involved in a wide variety of activities revolving around both fundraising for intervention services for women leaving violent homes as well as promoting events and activities to promote primary prevention.

YWCA Queensland has developed innovative solutions to these complex issues including Y Hand Up which is a medium to long-term support program, supporting transition housing, case coordination and practical support for DFV survivors and women at risk of homelessness. We have also developed three evidence-based primary prevention initiatives: an online Healthy Relationships program in partnership with TAFE Queensland; Love my Way, a program for senior students on healthy relationships; and Play for Change, an initiative for sporting clubs to contribute to making social change in addressing the drivers of DFV.

The Giving a Hand program is a program also to address some fundamental causes of poverty, homelessness and other forms of disadvantage and that is the inability to secure stable employment. We know through our work that effective change relies on a person-centred, strengths-based approach which means understanding and responding to needs of individuals in a safe, supportive, high-expectations environment. Our work culture of optimism, participative leadership, collective problem-solving, accountability and making a genuine difference to others provides the trainees with an opportunity to learn but also to develop their own vision and voice.

This year's participants have had the benefit of our learnings from the first year of traineeships and the maturity of the relationships and community partnerships formed over that time to support the program. Our trainees have gained valuable skills and experience participating in the planning and preparation of community events for YWCA and other business partners. Our partner agencies have provided some insight to that in their attached letters of support.

Working closely with local business operators exposes the trainees to the possible future employment opportunities and expanding their perception on possible career options.

YWCA Queensland offers a rounded solution to community needs and links to other community support and services where they cannot assist directly or do not have the appropriate expertise.

Criterion 2: Servicing community needs

We are an organisation that prides itself on being responsive to individual needs with the capability and agility to respond quickly in emergency situations, our broader aim of course is to provide more sustainable solutions. Current employment trends within the Toowoomba Regional boundary have shown significant growth in the Health Care & Social Assistance and Retail trade with the greatest employment growth area being females aged 25 – 54yrs, other significant indicators show significant growth is where vacancies require a certificate. These factors align with structure of the program delivered by YWCA Queensland and the placement trends for trainees.

In Toowoomba, Health Care and Social Assistance is one of the largest employer industries now with the disability sector being one of the fastest growing occupations since the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). NDIS is a new way of providing support for families and carers with disabilities. YWCA Queensland specialises in services for women with disabilities and has developed a service delivery model that allows us to maintain the intimacy of a small service, while drawing on the robust management and support systems of a larger organisation.

We have worked hard to develop a culture of professionalism and a passion for excellence among of SQW trainees which is in line with our expectations of all YWCA Queensland employees. A testament to this is our independent HDAA accreditation as a Disability Support Provider which requires a very high standard of customer service and quality. As one of the fastest growing employment industries, many of the participants in the SQW program have showed a keen interest in this area. The SQW participants are able to volunteer in our Y Ability program to gain hands on experience.

Through delivery of in kind support from many local employment service providers, participants are given the opportunity to discuss career paths. As each participant enters the program, their skills and interests are taken into consideration when deciding on a career pathway.

The trainees have exposure to many of the local industries on the Skilling Queenslander for Work Program to present them with options. Indeed an area of focus is about being able to adapt to different roles and build resilience.

91% of the first cohort found employment at the end of their program and of the current program due to finish on 25 April 2018, many already are on track to receiving an employment outcome.

Many of the employment outcomes from the SQW program have been a direct translation of the work experience placements trainees have been afforded throughout the program.

To that end there have been a number of different occupations attained upon completion of the program:

- Disability Support Worker
- Childcare Assistants
- Hairdressing Apprenticeship
- Electrical Apprenticeship
- Support Workers
- Factory Workers
- Retail Assistants
- Hospitality
- Administrative Assistants

Many of the SQW participants also showed interest in The Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP) offered through our local University of Southern Queensland. The aim of the program is to enable participants to gain entry into tertiary studies and prepare themselves for further study. As some of the participants on the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program had not had the opportunities to complete their high school education due to challenges faced in their lives, TPP offered them the prospect to enter into a broader career pathway.

We have broad connections within the Toowoomba community through our delivery of community housing, disability, transition housing and education programs. We have established close relationships with Centenary Heights State High School, The Glennie School and Fairview Heights State School all of which have run fundraising and have had guest speakers from our organisation at their events. We have a strong relationship with tertiary education providers including the University of Southern Queensland demonstrated through our sponsorship and involvement in their events as well as our strong and continuing partnership with TAFE Queensland. We also have developed great relationships with businesses and local corporate partners. Our ongoing Food Rescue service with our long-standing partner OzHarvest means we have established relationships with Woolworths, Aldi, Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport as well as other donors. We have had wonderful support for fundraising and other sorts of in-kind support from businesses such as the City Golf Club, Black Toyota and the Grand Central shopping precinct. In addition being able to draw on our extensive connections with other community service organisations contributes to our strong program outcomes through referrals to the program, referrals of participants to other services, support for other services through the trainees themselves volunteering, the provision of food relief on its own is an enormous benefit to people in need in the community.

With sustainable outcomes being a key focus we have an established alumni program which allows YWCA Queensland to remain in contact with past participants and offer follow-up support and mentoring to help maintain their connection with employment.

Criterion 3 : Strategies to assist participants

TAFE Queensland is now the registered training organisation for Giving a Hand and is one of the largest training providers in Queensland delivering practical, industry related training to students every year. TAFE trainers conduct workplace visits with additional support/contact provided via phone, Skype or CONNECT online. Prior to commencement on the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, each participant undertakes a Language, Literacy

and Numeracy (LLN) evaluation which sees participants undertake assessments to determine whether additional learning support is required. Of this current cohort one of our participants was identified as needing greater support, as part of the support process this participant now has a one on one tutor to assist them with building their foundation skills to, in turn, complete the modules for their Certificate I in Business.

YWCA Queensland looked at how to address the diversity and individual needs of the trainees through integrating inclusive practice as a key principle to supervision, training, communication and learning opportunities. The purpose is to ensure that the participants have the opportunity to develop confidence and self-agency in a safe, supportive space with a view to participating more fully in employment and opportunities and to feel valued and connected to the community. Integrated Case Management Plans identifying barriers, aspirations, goals and needs were carried out by the YWCA Queensland staff highlighting needs the participants faced in their past and appropriate training and support was put into place to ensure needs were met including physical, social, emotional, cultural or behavioral barriers in addition to considerations of background, in particular education, previous employment, family and medical history.

This assessment feeds into the design of the program and workshops and group development sessions as well as the coordination of individual support and coaching of the participant's Supervisor. The Supervisor was able to provide both support and feedback to each individual in order to achieve work tasks productively and to a high quality as this program is not simply a training program but an opportunity to be mentored by other leaders at YWCA Queensland Toowoomba office to build self-agency, confidence, self-belief and motivation to carry out such a program as well as achieve employability skills such as teamwork, communication and diligence. To achieve and ensure participants were kept on track, regular performance conversations were held with each trainee based on the organisation's standards articulated in the People and Performance Framework:

- Community and inter-agency relations
- Professionalism
- Communication
- Leadership and Teamwork
- Resources, Assets and Sustainability
- Service Delivery
- Program Management and Policy Development
- Change and Responsiveness
- Governance and Compliance

Whilst participants worked their way through the official training modules for their Certificate I in Business Administration, the trainees were able to practice and develop new skills in the tasks allocated by the Program Supervisor within the working office environment, such as writing and receiving emails, data entry and creating simple word documents and spreadsheets.

A Career planning and development workshop was carried out at the commencement of each cohort to identify the necessary attributes to help guide the trainees in relation to planning their employment pathway. Topics included Interests, Knowledge, Skills, Strengths, Weaknesses, Likes, Dislikes, Long term career goals and Short term career goals.

YWCA has built a rapport with many of the local businesses and organisations in Toowoomba to coordinate additional work experience placements for the trainees in their own time, including the Heights Community Centre, not only to give back to the community but giving them hands on experience in the workplace. Skills utilised in volunteering through use of business equipment are answering telephones and photocopying through to filing, communication in the workplace and attending to reception which they are vital skills to obtain future employment. During the traineeship, the participants were provided with a breadth of rich work opportunities in a variety of events, fundraising and gaining experience in community services administration.

In addition, the trainees were referred and connected to other expert services where appropriate including health, legal, mental health, counselling and housing. All participants were provided with access and encouraged to access

the Employee Assistance Program. Participants accessed a large range of professional development opportunities facilitated pro-bono from external agencies and also from internal staff with appropriate expertise. These included workshops from True Relationships, The Advocacy and Support Centre, Queensland Police and practical support through Dress for Success.

Through the events and other community activities, trainees have the opportunity of engaging with a wide variety of potential employers and it is through this avenue that some of the women have gained stable employment. In addition to workshops and coaching on CVs, job applications and interviews, trainees are directly connected with potential employers through our strong business and community connections which continue to improve over time.

Criterion 4 : Outcomes for participants

Our purpose in the Giving a Hand program funded by Skilling Queenslanders for Work is strongly aligned with our mission, that is to empower the trainees through supporting and working towards their safety, economic participation and leadership. While our overall aim is for them to gain stable employment and consequently financial stability and independence, for some of the participants that is not the immediate result but takes some time to achieve due to the nature of their past experiences and some of their barriers. The most important outcome is that the participants feel empowered to make informed choices to work towards the life they want for themselves. As some of the participants on the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program had not previously had opportunities to complete their high school education due to challenges faced in their lives, TPP gave them the prospect to enter into a career pathway which could bolster their financial security after completion. In some cases our participants have combined casual or part time work with further education.

The measures of success for the SQW program cover both quantitative and qualitative results and include a range of employment and training targets. Self-confidence is one of the keys to success and by empowering these women, building life skills, the growth in their confidence turns to positivity and employment outcomes.

Specific training targets

We have set a training performance target of 80% completion rate which has been met for each cohort to date.

In terms of a qualitative targets for our training we use a 90% target for Certificate I qualification vs a Certificate of attainment, performance against this measure has seen a gradual improvement from 75% for the 1st cohort, 92% for the 2nd cohort and 98% for the 3rd cohort. Cohorts 2 and 3 represent the 2018 results.

We have also achieved an employment outcome of 91% in the last group improved from the previous result.

35% of the participants of the Giving a Hand project are engaged in further study or a higher level qualification.

Diversity targets

We also have diversity targets for the SQW program to ensure a broader representation of community groups. By doing so we recognise that this in itself presents challenges for each individual and as members of a diverse team to work through any barriers they have to achieving positive outcomes. Our mentoring initiative serves to underpin the need to tailor individual programs for each participant, working closely with them to address their individual needs.

Specific diversity targets set for the selection process are

20% Mature age

20% Return to work

20% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI)

20% Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD)

We have met these targets for each cohort. However the actual results are dependent upon self-disclosure. In addition to these targets our participants are most likely to have other diversity factors such as mental health and victim of domestic violence which is often less likely to be disclosed.

The profile of the 26 participants from the current program include the following:

Three currently or recently experiencing Domestic and Family Violence

Seven Women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds

Two Women with Disability

Six Women Returning to Work
Five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
Fifteen Young Women
Five Mature age Women

The above results acknowledge that some of the participants are represented in more than one of the categories above.

We also have results that are not only employment-related:

- two participants are now living in a home free from violence
- four participants are in safe housing
- two participants have completed an application for Australian Citizenship

We now run referrals physically, through email and we also have developed a referral process through a webform on our website. In our first cohort of the Giving a Hand project, we ran recruitment through Seek in addition to seeking referrals through partner community services organisations such as Multicultural Development Association, Mercy Services and our own Community Housing, as well as eliciting referrals through networks with schools. We now conduct group information sessions on the program so potential participants can self-select for example that they are able to commit to the full program and understand the responsibilities and expectations. Interviews are then conducted to select the final participants conducted by a panel of managers.

All trainees attended the campuses of both the University of Southern Queensland and TAFE Queensland South West to familiarise themselves with the student services areas, to find out about course offerings and to see the facilities and services available. In addition, Golden West Apprenticeships also ran information sessions on apprenticeships and traineeships including current positions available.

Criterion 5 : Partnerships and links

YWCA Queensland is a leading voice for women and through its engagement strategy, aims to improve revenue, reach the wider community, grow in reputation and positively impact as many people's lives as possible. YWCA Queensland values its publications and communications as a way of providing a consistent, strong representation of who we are at every client contact point, in order to build and maintain brand recognition. YWCA Queensland communicates with stakeholders and members through:

- fortnightly newsletters
- correspondence
- brochures and flyers
- media releases, print media, radio and televisions interviews
- social media – Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn
- newsletters
- organisational documents eg. Annual reports

YWCA Queensland builds and maintains its business relationships and partnerships primarily through their products and services, complemented by a level of social investment and seeks to actively market and grow its disability services, school programs, third party fundraising and events.

We have maintained high expectations of the support and timeliness required of our training providers and as set out in our partner agreements. TAFE Queensland joined with YWCA Queensland as our new registered training provider for the SQW program for this current cohort, replacing HB Training. Our decision to change providers was due to the need for a more responsive support program for our participants, particularly in light of the learning needs for those individuals, in addition to a desire to ensure the trainees had access to high quality resources and assessment to be able to achieve the qualification. We meet regularly with TAFE Queensland and they provide us with regular performance information for individuals to enable the best level of support to be provided to individual participants.

We have established a network of community supports for the SQW program and we value their contribution to

YWCA Queensland and the opportunities presented to us. Our partnerships and networks are built on a strong foundation of being clear about our values and mission, transparency of agenda, working on mutual benefit and win/win solutions and collective work and intelligence, ensuring we identify where we can add value to the sector and to the community rather than compete and provide similar services to someone else. We have a solid reputation for being a quality, trusted organisation with strong governance with an approach that seeks to work from an evidence base, to seek innovation and productive ways of working over adversarial approaches. YWCA Queensland has established these deep and sustainable partnerships through its relational approach rather than transactional, from a "how can we add value" to "what benefit is there to us", in addition to having a primary focus on the outcomes for our constituency and those we are aiming to serve.

The effectiveness of this approach is demonstrated by the outcomes of two significant partnerships. Firstly the partnership with OzHarvest established in 2016, that has resulted not only in the building of employability skills of the trainees but also over 25 tonnes of food that has been rescued and delivered to people in need, also contributing to reduction in landfill. Secondly our partnership with TAFE Queensland to work together on initiatives to increase gender equality and to reduce violence against women which has resulted in our online Healthy Relationships Program, made available since the beginning of 2017 to over 100,000 TAFE Queensland students. We establish new relationships through identifying opportunities and reaching out to have conversations with organisations with similar values, some of which are listed below.

YWCA Queensland has been presented with many opportunities for the trainees to contribute to the organisation of community events. The following is a selection of our recent community engagements working alongside our partners and sponsors:

- Toowoomba Hospital Foundation "Magda at the Mills" event with Magda Szubanski
- USQ Student Guild "For Purpose" conference
- V Day Breakfast
- USQ Alumni Shine IWD lunch
- Think, Eat Save, OzHarvest
- Bunnings Sausage Sizzles, Cake stalls, Raffles
- Institute of Managers and Leaders IWD Great Debate
- Launch of Dress for Success Toowoomba, Cedar Centre

Other community organisations that have donated their valuable time include

- PCYC "Braking the Cycle" driver education program
- Breast cancer awareness, Breastscreen Queensland
- Business Blocks
- True Relations, Sexual Health
- Queensland Police, Community Safety
- Dress for Success Brisbane
- The Advocacy and Support Centre (TASC), community legal services
- Beyond Budget, Laurie Griggs

We also have established relationships with both the donors and the recipient organisations of the Food Rescue service delivered through OzHarvest.

The many partnerships, connections and joint enterprises that YWCA Queensland has developed over many years built a solid foundation to support our SQW program.

I have attached a logo or image representing the nomination

Log in to qta.awardsplatform.com to see complete nomination attachments.

	
Attachment type Business logo	
Y Logo.jpg	21 KiB

 PDF	
Attachment type Newspaper articles	
Giving a hand me...	783 KiB

 PDF	
Attachment type Workplace photo	
Giving a hand sta...	2.5 MiB

 PDF	
Attachment type Letter of support	
QTA supporting d...	534 KiB

DO NOT COPY