

# QSEC Reset & Recovery Evaluation Report

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*With appropriate guidance and support, many rural challenges and needs could be transformed into opportunities for social enterprise development”*

- Steiner & Teasdale (2010)

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# Introduction



This report and the investigations on which it is based were made possible through a grant from the Queensland Government's Department of Employment, Small Business and Training. The grant is intended to support the Queensland social enterprise sector to adapt and respond to COVID-19, and for the sector to play a central role in regenerating the post-COVID economy.

The Yunus Centre team – Matthew Allen, Alex Hannant and Dr Joanne McNeill – were engaged to conduct an evaluation of the Reset & Recovery project, building on the Reset & Recovery Impact Map to understand the program's effectiveness in contributing to regional economic development through social enterprise.

This report presents an overview of the background and operating context for the Reset & Recovery project (Part One), followed by an evaluation of the project's outputs and outcomes (Part Two) and three case studies showcasing some of the program's impacts (Part Three).

It is intended that this report will contribute to the evidence base supporting locally appropriate and community-led approaches to economic development through social enterprise, and that it can be used to help guide future initiatives of this kind.

The Yunus Centre evaluation team recognises the innumerable hours of voluntary labour that have enabled this project's success, and we acknowledge all those in the social enterprise sector who are working to build a more equitable and sustainable world.

This report was written on Awabakal country. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we live and work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

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*“You’re the first people who have actually sat and listened... people usually cut in and share their own ideas. I don’t need any more ideas, I just need help to articulate what I’m trying to achieve”*  
- Reset workshop participant

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# Part One: Background



## 1.1. Queensland Social Enterprise Council (QSEC)

The Queensland Social Enterprise Council (QSEC) was established in 2012-2013 to provide grassroots representation, advocacy and support for the social enterprise sector. Today, QSEC is a growing organisation representing 170 social enterprises and 58 associate members (who are not social enterprise themselves, but are interested in establishing one in the future, or supporting the social enterprise sector). QSEC operates according to three core drivers which guide the way it does business:

1. Creating value for members by representing the voice of social enterprises, raising awareness of the sector, investing energy into social enterprise spaces and support systems, and creating opportunities for members to connect and engage with one another.
2. Supporting sector development by seeking dedicated funding for social enterprises, driving improved data collection and impact measurement in the sector, and co-creating plans for the long-term growth and development of social enterprise in Queensland.
3. Representing and advocating for social enterprises by contributing to policy and stakeholder discussions, raising the profile of social enterprise at all levels of government, and creating opportunities for members to contribute to systems change for the common good.

QSEC is primarily volunteer-run, with a democratically elected Board of Directors comprising social enterprise practitioners and supporters. As a member-driven organisation, QSEC places a high value on grassroots organising, democratic processes, and community-driven solutions to environmental and social issues. In addition to the overarching role of

state-level peak body, QSEC has played an instrumental role in the development and nurturing of regional social enterprise networks in each of Queensland's twelve regions<sup>1</sup>.

Among QSEC's achievements to date include: coordinating the Stand Up Social Enterprise research and advocacy project and Unconference in 2019; the Positive Action with Every Transaction marketing campaign; and working with the State Government of Queensland to implement a two-year social enterprise development strategy focussed primarily on employment creation.

At a national level, QSEC has been influential in the process of establishing a national voice for social enterprise through the Alliance of Social Enterprise Networks Australia (ASENA), and contributed their extensive knowledge and experience to the recently released Social Enterprise National Strategy Directions Report. As a key social enterprise intermediary in Queensland, QSEC also brings together an extensive network of supporters and collaborators spanning community organisations, non-profits, businesses, education providers and government.

*“The help we get from QSEC is really vital. It really helps motivate people to come to meetings and collaborate more.”*

**- Reset workshop participant,  
Central Queensland**

# Part One: Background



## 1.2. Reset & Recovery

The world has fundamentally changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is in this context that the Reset & Recovery project was created. According to a recent KPMG report, some of the key themes that will characterise Australia's post-COVID reality include a transition to more localised and agile supply chains; a greater emphasis on ESG and sustainability; and the rise of a 'local-first' approach to doing business<sup>2</sup>. This highlights the opportunity for Queensland's post-covid recovery to be focussed on supporting the types of economic activity that will create a more socially and environmentally sustainable world, rather than simply working to rebuild the same type of economy that existed pre-COVID. As organisations that generate funds through trading activity, while also striving to create positive social and environmental impacts, social enterprises can offer sustainable, locally appropriate and resilient approaches in the post-pandemic recovery.

A national survey of 192 Australian social enterprises in June 2020 found that while 57% of social enterprises experienced significant or drastic revenue declines due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 91% expected to still be trading by the end of that year. Importantly, 75% of respondents said that they had significant potential to recover and grow in a post-COVID environment, providing that support from government in the form of procurement targets and grants to grow or pivot could be made available<sup>3</sup>.

The Reset and Recovery (Reset & Recovery) project emerged as part of the Queensland Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing support to social enterprises to help them contribute to Queensland's post-COVID economic recovery. The project involved recruitment and training of three Regional Activators in regional Queensland, who were responsible for working with QSEC, Central Queensland University (CQUni) and other

stakeholders to coordinate a series of two-day **Reset Workshops** involving general social enterprise skills training and a networking opportunity for interested social enterprises in Far North Queensland, Darling Downs and Central Queensland. Following these workshops, participants were invited to submit project proposals for the second stage of **Recovery Workshops**, which were facilitated by CQUni. At least one place-based project was selected in each of the three regional areas to participate in the Recovery Workshops, where participants developed their social enterprise models through a codesign process, with the objective of arriving at realistic, viable and launch-ready social enterprise ideas. The anticipated results of the overall Reset & Recovery project were:

- To create stronger working relationships and collaboration between industry, enterprises, social welfare, environment, union, First Nations and other organisations focused on supporting social enterprises to reset their businesses and prepare for the recovery phase;
- To generate three regionally focused recovery projects, endorsed by members of the co-design team;
- To generate a Reset and Recovery report, case studies, academic evaluation and media articles of placed-based activation;
- A series of presentations, workshops and events relating to rebuilding the social enterprise start up space for Queensland, amplifying key successes and best practice;
- Joint project proposals, investment opportunities, activities and campaigns to support regional social enterprises; and
- For policy recommendations to be adopted by relevant government agencies.

# Part One: Background



## 1.3. Operating Context

### 1.3.1. Place: Regional Queensland

The Reset & Recovery project took place in three areas of regional Queensland; Darling Downs, Far North Queensland, and Central Queensland. To date, the majority of social enterprise supports, networks and programs tend to be concentrated in large urban centres, particularly Brisbane. Furthermore, the support, training and capacity-building activities that are developed to support social enterprises tend to reflect the needs and priorities of city-based enterprises, which in many cases, differ greatly from those of their rural and regional counterparts<sup>4</sup>. Conversely, rural and regional social enterprises are ideally placed to build on the comparatively high levels of social capital in rural areas, developing place-based enterprises that can contribute to addressing areas of disadvantage where both market-based and policy-based measures have not succeeded<sup>5</sup>.

As such, the Reset & Recovery project was intended to create locally situated and appropriate social enterprise support and education opportunities for its cohorts, drawing on expertise from social enterprise practitioners from across Australia while supporting local Regional Activators to coordinate engagement with the social enterprise communities in their respective regions.

Each of the three regions selected for the Reset & Recovery project have an emerging social enterprise network, as well as several established social enterprises with the capacity to provide support and mentoring to new enterprises.

*“The social enterprises up here aren’t a fad; they are businesses that are solving problems and generating money. They don’t have the critical mass like you do down in other places like Brisbane, or Sydney...”*

**- Crystal Williams, Far North Queensland Regional Activator**

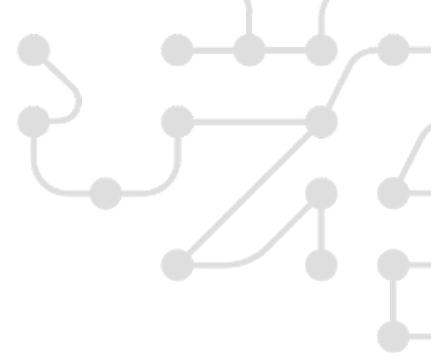


Far North Qld

Central Qld

Darling Downs

# Part One: Background



## *Place: Regional Queensland (cont'd)*

### **Darling Downs:**

The Darling Downs and South West Region regional development area has a population of approximately 275,000 people. The area has an unemployment rate of 6.2%, compared with the Regional Queensland average of 7.8%. The largest industry (by employment) in the region is health care and social assistance, followed by agriculture, forestry and fishing, construction, and education<sup>6</sup>. There are five current QSEC members based in Darling Downs, including one associate member. Members in this region include the high-profile social enterprise Vanguard Laundry, which operates a commercial laundry facility in Toowoomba providing job opportunities for people experiencing disadvantage.

### **Far North Queensland:**

The Far North Queensland area (FNQ) has a population of approximately 282,000 people. The area has an unemployment rate of 6.5%. The largest industry (by employment) in the region is health care and social assistance, followed closely by retail and construction<sup>7</sup>. There are ten current QSEC members based in Far North Queensland including one associate member. Far North Queensland is also home to the Social Enterprise Network for the Tropics (SENT), an independent network that works closely with QSEC to support social enterprise development in the region. QSEC members in the FNQ region include Bama Facilities Maintenance and the MaraWay, both of which are well-known Indigenous-led social enterprises.

### **Central and Western Queensland:**

The Central and Western Queensland (CQ) area has a population of approximately 230,000 people. The area has an unemployment rate of 6.5%<sup>8</sup>. There are twelve current QSEC members based in Central and Western Queensland, including three associate members.

QSEC members in the Central and Western Queensland region include Strong Communities and Rural Health Connect, two of several health-focussed social enterprises working to address the challenges in accessing health services for regional Queenslanders.

## **Regional Development & Social Capital**

A study of community development in four remote Australian communities (Onyx & Leonard 2010) highlights the essential role of social capital and community connection in delivering durable social outcomes:

*“Rural communities have the willingness and capacity to mobilize... but whether this capacity is actualized may well depend on the presence of other mobilizing factors... a structure needs to be in place which can take the initiative and work across the community — engaging a range of organizations. Second, the structure needs to be supported, but not controlled, by local government. Third, it needs the kind of social entrepreneurship that can sustain a community-wide vision and bring together the diverse groups within the community”* (p.395)

Noting the success of initiatives led from the grassroots community level, the authors also argue that:

*“...leadership which mobilizes social capital across a community must strengthen and increase the horizontal ties that create the social capital... it cannot redirect horizontal relationships into vertical leader-follower relationships”* (p. 394)

# Part One: Background



## 1.3.2. Purpose

The Reset & Recovery project was developed to contribute to QSEC'S vision of a vibrant, innovative and capable social enterprise sector in Queensland that is sufficiently resourced to achieve high social, cultural and environmental impact. In particular, Reset & Recovery sought to apply a place-based lens to social enterprise support, contributing to the capacity and strength of local social enterprises and their networks, while also providing tailored workshops and co-design sessions to improve the skillsets of local entrepreneurs. This situates Reset & Recovery, and QSEC more generally, in a role of 'enabling' social enterprise activity to emerge from a specific and unique local context, rather than guiding or leading a particular social enterprise approach or organisation type. This is an important distinction to make in understanding Reset & Recovery's purpose, with some authors in the field of rural social entrepreneurship (e.g. Steiner & Teasdale 2019; Munoz, Steiner & Farmer 2014) arguing that locally based, niche, and potentially small-scale social enterprises are the most appropriate vehicle for addressing the specific challenges of rural areas, and that the approach of simply 'scaling up' or expanding existing enterprises into rural communities is less likely to succeed in addressing the particular issues and challenges of those communities.

Although the Reset & Recovery program was marketed to both emerging and established enterprises, the primary focus of the learning materials was on early-stage foundational skills such as developing a business model canvas, assessing opportunities, and implementing a theory of change . As such, this project can be situated within stages 2-4 of the framework in Box 1 below, operating in a context where social enterprise has gained some degree of legitimacy in the community, but where there are still significant gaps in understanding, capacity and skill.



Reset workshop participants, FNQ

### The five stages framework for regional social enterprise development:

Munoz, Steiner & Farmer (2014) propose that there are five stages in the process of establishing successful community-led social enterprises in rural and regional areas:

**Stage 1 – legitimacy**, where community members connect and engage with the concept of social enterprise;

**Stage 2 – needs/opportunity recognition**, where individuals and groups identify new and unmet needs and identify potential roles for social entrepreneurship;

**Stage 3 – group coalescence**, where community members identify their skills and resources, begin building alliances and coalitions, and harness local support;

**Stage 4 – organizational establishment**, where social enterprise models are built through business planning and other formal processes

**Stage 5 – social enterprise begins operation** in a form that is fit for purpose and sensitive to local needs and culture

### Box 1: Stages of community-led social enterprise development

# Part One: Background



## 1.4. Project Partners

The Reset and Recovery project was delivered as a collaboration involving several social enterprise sector stakeholders. This means that a range of organisations were involved in all stages of the project from inception through to delivery, with QSEC playing an overall coordination role. Table 1 below lists key project partners, along with their role in the project and a brief description of the activities they undertook. In addition to these main partners, the Reset & Recovery project also drew on the support and participation of a number of additional organisations and individuals, including local councils, Chambers of Commerce, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) officers, and Public Benefit Organisations including White Box Enterprises.

*“I think the collaborations between big institutions like the university and the on the ground activators.... are vital for this type of work. I think that the tailored nature of what we've done actually sets people up for success. I think that it's worth the investment early on, and you're more likely to have successful sustainable social enterprises by taking the time to invest in building capacity.”*

*- Ashley Clarke, CQUniversity*

Partner	Role	Activities
QSEC	Project Coordination	Overall coordination of project, including recruitment of regional activators, coordination of stakeholders, and hosting digital resources.
CQUniversity	Workshop facilitation	Key contributor to workshop facilitation and content of Reset workshops; facilitator of co-design process for Recovery projects.
Social Traders	Procurement partner	Key contributor to workshop facilitation and content of Reset workshops; provision of procurement-readiness support for Recovery projects.
Regional Activators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Darling Downs</li><li>• Central Queensland</li><li>• Far North Queensland</li></ul>	Grassroots regional activation and organising	Engagement of local social enterprise communities and coordination of Reset workshops, including surveying local social enterprises and co-design of workshop content and promotion of events; ongoing support to Recovery projects.

Table 1: Partners, roles and activities in Reset & Recovery

# Part One: Background



## 1.5. Regional Activators

The Regional Activators played a critical part in engaging with their local communities, mobilising support from local social enterprises and other stakeholders, and promoting Reset workshop events. Their role was one of linking the broader Reset & Recovery project with their particular local contexts, a particularly important consideration for a project that sought to support the development of local, place-based social enterprise projects. The profiles of each of the three Regional Activators (Darling Downs, FNQ and Central Queensland) are shown below:



### Darling Downs: Angharad Lubbock

Angharad is the Head of Advisory Services and Programs at White Box Enterprises, a SheEO Activator, and the Founder of the Springboard Company. She comes to the social enterprise sector with wide-ranging experience in Australia and Europe encompassing corporate finance and treasury, strategy and corporate development, and purpose-led consulting.

*"I love living in Toowoomba and I love this region - there is a level of economic resilience in this region that's quite astounding for me. The ingredients are there for a very strong social enterprise sector. It's really important that this region gets consistent support - I think the potential impact is massive. There are a really engaged, kind and capable, experienced group of people here."*



### Far North Queensland: Dr. Crystal Williams

Dr Williams has a PhD in entrepreneurship and innovation with expertise in SMEs, start-ups, social enterprise (SEs), and micro-enterprise development. She worked with QSEC as a member of the Board of Directors to help shape a coherent representative and ambitious growth strategy for social enterprise and impact-led businesses across Queensland, and raised the profile of social entrepreneurs as innovators in business, impact, and inclusive economic recovery in Far North Queensland by initiating the first Social Enterprise Summit for Northern Australia (SESNA) 2020. Williams has also conducted research on social enterprise and creative businesses across Australia and Far North Queensland.

*"During the workshops, I saw that people were discovering more about what social enterprises could offer them, and more about their own business model and how it was fitting into a social enterprise business model. What resources, what help was available to them, background information about sector...I think it gave them a big broad perspective on the sector. It inspired them. It gave them tools to get started"*



### Central Queensland: Strong Communities

Strong Communities is a social enterprise that seeks to support regional communities' wellbeing through the provision of services for children, families and organisations. Their contribution to the Reset & Recovery program was led by **Charmaine Tolhurst** and **Natalia Muszkat**, the organisation's co-founders. As a result of their engagement in the Reset workshops, Strong Communities decided to propose their own project for consideration in the Recovery workshops, where their role in the program shifted from facilitator to participant.

*"We've never had something like this, that was coordinated and managed in rural Queensland - Reset and Recovery is a funded situation where we can push the sector and get the sector together. Having local activators paid to do this work, we definitely put social enterprise in the minds of people in our local area."*

# Part One: Background



## 1.6. Summary of Project Activities

### 1. Project initiation

- Developing high-level workshop plans and timelines
- Recruitment and onboarding of regional activators
- Initial sector and stakeholder mapping for each region

### 2. Reset workshop development

- Regional mapping surveys distributed to social enterprises and other sector stakeholders in each of the project areas.
- Survey results informed the development of workshops materials for the two-day Reset workshops that were held in each region,
- QSEC and other project partners developed tailored content that attempted to address the areas of most significant need.

### 3. Reset workshop delivery

- Two-Reset workshops were held in each of the three target regions.
- In the FNQ region, a workshop was also held specifically for local government representatives to learn more about social enterprise models and opportunities in the region.

### 4. Digital Toolkit

- Online resource bank for early-stage social enterprises, developed in consultation with Reset workshop participants and available to all QSEC members
- Digital Toolkit will be part of the larger QSEC Learning Centre project

### 5. Recovery Project Applications

- QSEC and CQUni staff worked closely with participants to develop their applications and concept notes for the Recovery program.
- Four social enterprise ideas were selected to progress to Recovery ideation stage; two in Central Queensland, and one each in FNQ and Darling Downs.

### 6. Recovery Ideation sessions

- Co-design of workshop content with participants in each region
- Approximately 3 hours per project spent in conversation with entrepreneurs to refine ideas and develop priorities for workshop
- Two-day ideation workshop to develop a clear, viable and actionable social enterprise concept, along with a staged approach to developing the enterprise.

### 7. Post-program support

- Ongoing informal advice and support from QSEC and CQUni staff
- All Recovery participants given access to the iActivate online short course for early-stage social entrepreneurs<sup>9</sup>
- Online grants and funding workshop held in collaboration with CQU

### 8. Next steps

- QSEC has employed a membership officer to develop a series of workshops based on learnings from Reset
- Digital Toolkit to remain online as a permanent resource for QSEC members
- QSEC Learning Centre currently under development, incorporating courses that guide startup members through the process of legal, marketing, theory of change, marketing and social procurement.

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## Footnotes for Part One:

1. Queensland Social Enterprise Council website 2021, 'Explore our QSEC regions', accessed 26 June 2021, < <https://www.qsec.org.au/Regions>>

2. KPMG 2021, 'Our New Reality: Predictions after COVID-19', accessed 20 June 2021, <<https://home.kpmg/au/en/home/insights/2020/05/predictions-after-covid-19.html>>

3. Social Traders 2020, 'COVID-19 Impacts and Recovery Prospects for the Australian Social Enterprise Sector', accessed 21 June 2021, < <https://www.socialtraders.com.au/covid-19/covid-19-impacts-and-recovery-prospects-for-the-australian-social-enterprise-sector/>>

4. Steiner, A., & Teasdale, S. (2019). Unlocking the potential of rural social enterprise. *J Rural Stud*, 70, 144-154. doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.12.021

5. Steiner, A., Farmer, J., & Bosworth, G. (2019). Rural social enterprise – Evidence to date, and a research agenda. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 70, 139-143. doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2019.08.008

6. Economy.id website 2021, 'Economic profile: RDA Darling Downs and South West Region', accessed 19 June 2021, <<https://economy.id.com.au/rda-dd-sw/employment-by-industry>>

7. Economy.id website 2021, 'Economic profile: Far North Queensland ROC', accessed 19 June 2021, <<https://economy.id.com.au/fnqroc/home>>

8. RDA Central and Western Queensland 2019, *The Future of Regional Jobs*, accessed 18 June 2021, < <https://rdafcw.com.au/publications-resources/the-future-of-regional-jobs-april-2019/>>

9. Short course run by CQUni – see <https://www.cqu.edu.au/industry-and-partnerships/engagement/social-innovation/iactivate>

# Part Two: Evaluation

## 2.1. Methodology

The evaluation of QSEC’s Reset & Recovery project has been guided by two principles; program logic, which seeks to examine and test the chains of cause-and-effect that connect an organisation’s activities to their desired impacts, and utilisation-focussed evaluation, in which evaluation methodology is grounded in the needs and priorities of the intended participants, users and readers<sup>1</sup>. As such, the first step in the evaluation process involved working with QSEC staff to review and revise the Impact Map (see page 15) which articulates the theory of change underpinning Reset & Recovery - detailing what the project was proposing to do, for whom, and towards what ultimate goals. As detailed in the ‘Data Collection’ section below, the evaluation involved using existing qualitative and quantitative data collected while delivering the project, along with a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews canvassing a range of program participants and stakeholders. This approach also had the benefit of allowing ongoing iteration of the evaluation method; for example, by returning to conduct follow-up interviews with Recovery participants, for whom the impacts of the program were emerging over a longer period of time.

It is important to highlight two challenges in evaluating the impact of a project such as this. Firstly, it seeks to influence change at a systemic, as well as practical, level; in other words, in addition to the immediate results of the project for participants and stakeholders, QSEC sought to provide an injection of capacity into the social

enterprise ecosystems of regional Queensland, aiming to create a positive ripple effect for these communities and generating further (potentially unpredictable) impacts beyond the life of the project. This approach is inherently challenging to evaluate, as long-term impacts are likely to emerge far beyond the time-limited evaluation period, and in any case, would be difficult to attribute directly to QSEC’s actions. Secondly, while the positive impact of networks and intermediaries in social entrepreneurship is well-recognised, it is also true that it is challenging to meaningfully evaluate the impacts of these networks and intermediaries, as their primary objective is to enable, facilitate and support the activities of their members - whose successes and challenges in delivering social impact will be only partially attributable to the contributions of the network.

Given these challenges, it is important to note that this evaluation can only meaningfully examine the areas that are within the direct control of QSEC, particularly when there are a complex range of factors that determine whether a given long-term outcome occurs. Figure 1 highlights the elements an organisation has direct control over, and can therefore evaluate directly, as compared with areas which it can only influence or contribute to. In this context, the role of an Impact Map in evaluation is to articulate what the organisation has done, how effective it has been in achieving its outputs, and whether there is evidence to suggest that they are meaningfully contributing to the achievement of their long-term outcomes.

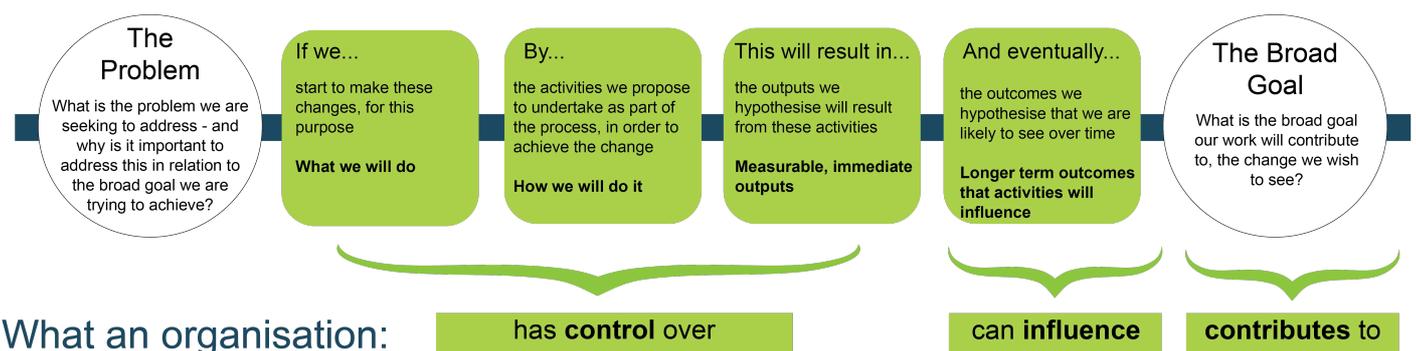
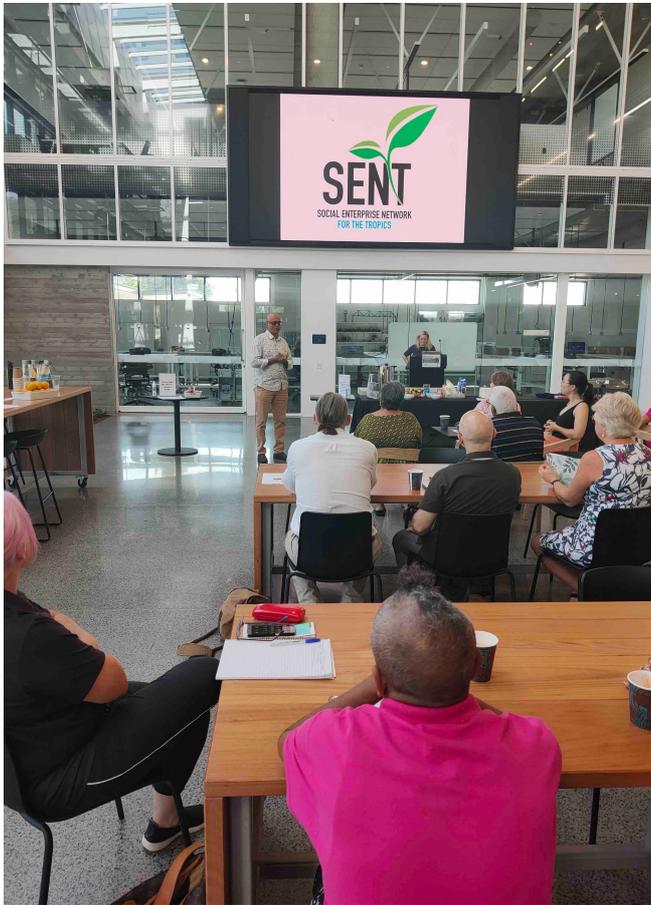


Figure 1: Areas of control and influence in the impact map (adapted from Burkett, McNeill & Allen 2020)

# Part Two: Evaluation



Reset workshop presentation, FNQ

## 2.1.1. Objectives

The objectives of this evaluation are:

- To provide a comprehensive account of how, with whom, and for what purpose QSEC designed and delivered the Reset and Recovery project.
- To examine the extent to which QSEC's approach to delivering Reset & Recovery was effective in supporting social enterprises and their ecosystems in regional Queensland.
- To understand the particular benefits, challenges and impacts of employing local Activators to support social enterprise activity in their communities.
- To work with social entrepreneurs in each of the three project areas to develop case studies highlighting specific stories and/or outcomes of the Reset and Recovery program
- To evaluate the potential of Reset & Recovery as a model for future support initiatives targeting social enterprises in regional and remote communities.

## Complexity, systems change and the ripple effect:

*“As a problem solving approach, the complexity approach does not focus on finding the one way to solve a complex problem, instead its focus is on providing a framework within which stakeholders can learn, interact and adapt to maximise their effectiveness in addressing complex and wicked problems. Therefore, instead of creating initiatives to solve problems using cause and effect logic, social entrepreneurship from a complexity perspective focuses on the creation of conditions that enable the initiatives and the organisations partnering on initiatives in a solution ecosystem to transition coherently from their current state to a new and improved state” (Zivkovic, 2019)*

# Part Two: Evaluation



## 2.1.2. Data Collection

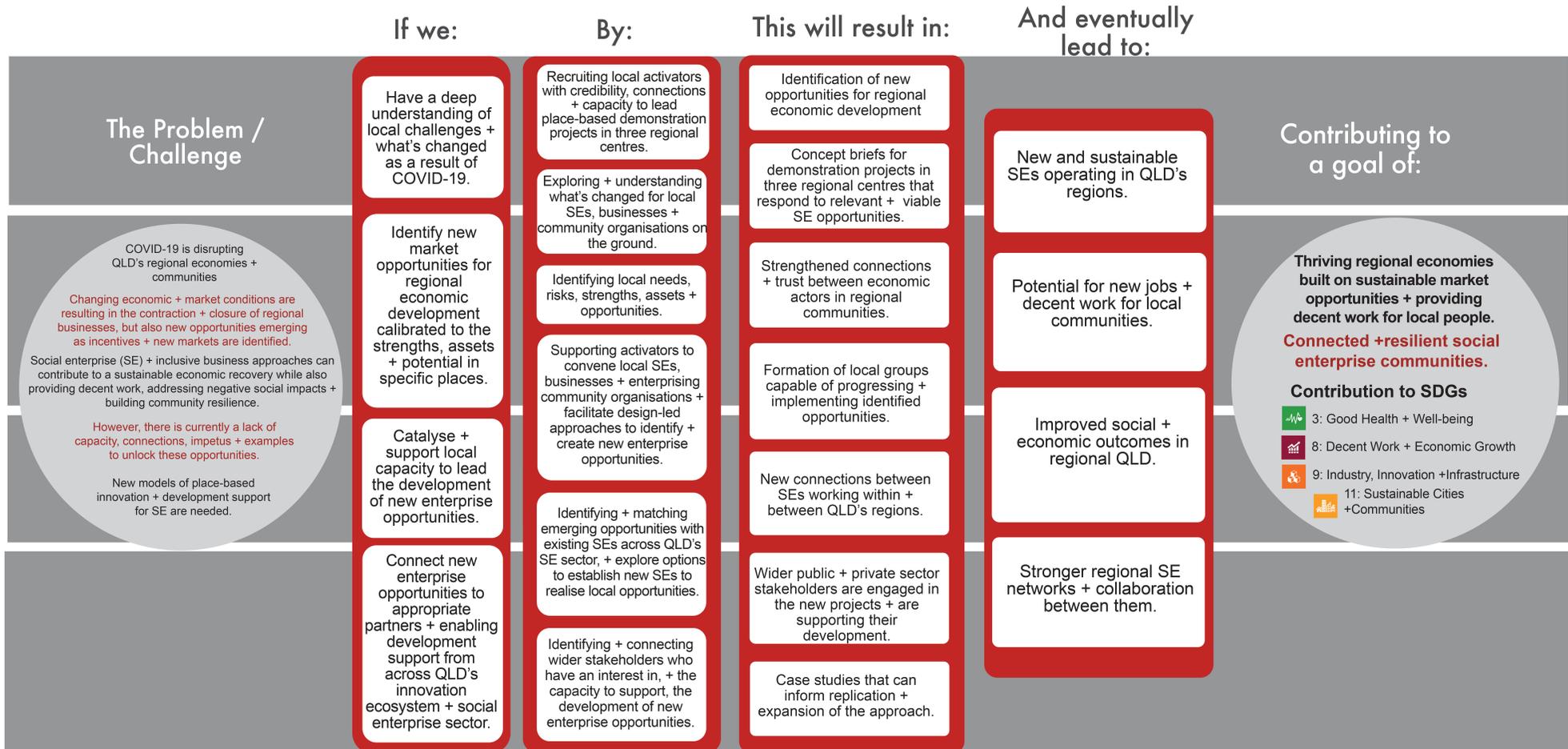
The following table (Table 2) summarises the data that was drawn upon for the evaluation process.

Data source	Notes
Regional stakeholder mapping survey results x 3	Total of 52 respondents
Post-event participant survey results x 3	Total of 16 respondents
Activator reports to QSEC x 3	
Interviews with Reset workshop participants x 7	
Interviews with program partners x 4	QSEC, Social Scaffolding, Social Traders, CQUniversity
Interviews with regional Activators x 3	
Interviews with Recovery workshop participants x 4	1 initial interview immediately following completion of workshops, and a follow-up meeting 4-6 weeks after workshops.
Interview with Recovery workshop facilitators x 2	
Web analytics data for QSEC Digital Toolkit	
Photographs, printouts and other digital artefacts of participants' work at Reset and Recovery workshops	

Table 2: Evaluation data sources

# Part Two: Evaluation

## 2.2. Reset & Recovery Impact Map



# Part Two: Evaluation



## 2.3. Output Evaluation

### 2.3.1. Identification of new opportunities for regional economic development



**Data quality**



**Progress to date**

Data to support this output was gathered from participant interviews, Reset workshop evaluation surveys, Regional Activator reports, and Recovery workshop outputs (including photographs, scans, PowerPoint slides and other participant-generated artefacts).

Based on the available information, we are confident that a significant degree of progress has been made towards this output.

QSEC's pre-workshop stakeholder mapping surveys revealed that 60% of responding social enterprises were interested in developing and understanding new market opportunities. As such, opportunity and trend identification featured centrally in the Reset workshop series. Each workshop invited participants to develop and discuss a list of potential opportunities for the development of social enterprises in their regions, resulting in a list of more than 60 potential ideas for social enterprise activity and regional economic development.

A total of five social enterprise initiatives have been developed and progressed as a direct result of the Reset and Recovery workshops, four of which were part of the Recovery ideation sessions, and one of which is the local government-led Upcycle Village project in Rockhampton. While not all of these opportunities were completely new, and nearly all had been developed to some extent prior to the Reset and Recovery workshops, interviews with Recovery participants highlighted the value of the ideation sessions in bringing more focus and direction to their enterprise ideas. This value was, to a large extent, derived from the tailored and collaborative nature of the workshop sessions, an approach grounded in CQUni's commitments to co-design and participatory practices. Of the four Recovery participants interviewed, all agreed that the materials, content and activities were appropriately tailored and suited to their enterprises, and

that their ideas underwent a significant amount of development over the course of the two-day ideation sessions.

In addition to the four social opportunities explored in the Recovery ideation sessions, the attendance of a Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) representative at a Reset workshop led to a project proposal to develop a regional social enterprise 'upcycle village' based at the Rockhampton resource recovery facility. This project, which has recently received additional funding from the Queensland Government, is an example of the type of social enterprise initiative that can emerge from programs like Reset & Recovery. Over the course of 2021, CQUni will be leading a community co-design process that aims to develop and implement several new social enterprises, helping to address problematic waste streams and drive progress towards RRC's zero-waste goals.

# Part Two: Evaluation



## 2.3.2. Concept briefs for demonstration projects in three regional centres that respond to relevant and viable SE opportunities.



**Data quality**



**Progress to date**

Data to support this output was gathered from Recovery participant interviews, Regional Activator reports, and Recovery workshop outputs (including photographs, scans, PowerPoint slides and other participant-generated artefacts).

Based on the available information, we are reasonably confident that some progress has been made towards this output, with more time and implementation work needed to gain a fuller understanding of the viability of the demonstration projects listed below.

### Central Queensland:

#### **Upcycle CQ**

A social enterprise concept creating employment opportunities for young people through the reuse, recycling and upcycling of discarded goods and materials. Currently working on a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) for launch, the enterprise has an informal structure and board, and intends to complete the process of officially incorporating as soon as possible. Next steps include formalising the involvement of young people in the governance of the enterprise, collaborating with the Upcycle Village project in Rockhampton to explore specific resource streams, and launching an MVP to test market demand and assumptions.

#### **Strong Communities EAP**

Concept summary: An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) hosted within the existing organisation Strong Communities, offering a EAP service for parents in the workforce who are facing challenging circumstances and require specific and tailored support. Currently in the process of delivering a trial run of the new product to two existing customers, allowing Strong Communities to test the price range and gather feedback. Next steps include fine-tuning price-points, developing a go-to-market strategy for the product, and launching to a wider audience.

### Far North Queensland:

#### **First Nations-led sustainable housing**

Social enterprise concept developed by Indigenous community leader Sandi Taylor, seeking to use local and recycled resources to build housing and enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to live where they choose. Currently developing an informal 'critical friends' group to develop enterprise from concept-stage towards implementation, as well as seeking out research and resources to inform the project's development. Next steps include formalising an advisory committee and organisational structure, and creating a proposal for a pilot project to develop technical aspects of project.

### Darling Downs:

#### **BASE Services horticulture social enterprise**

Social enterprise concept developed by Tiff Spary of BASE Services, seeking to create employment for people experiencing disadvantage and homelessness via an in-house horticulture business. Currently in the process of investigating potential land and assets that could be used to build the enterprise, as well as distributing responsibility for the enterprise across a wider range of BASE services staff. Next steps include implementing Concept Testing plan developed at Recovery ideation session to increase understanding of market and develop a costed implementation plan.

# Part Two: Evaluation



## 2.3.3. Strengthened connections and trust between economic actors in regional communities.



**Data quality**



**Progress to date**

Data to support this output was gathered from participant interviews, Regional Activator reports, and Reset workshop participant survey results.

Based on the information available, we are reasonably confident that some progress has been made towards this output, with more time needed to see the ongoing results of the connections that were made during the Reset and Recovery project. For the purposes of this evaluation, we have defined 'economic actors' as comprising local government, locally situated businesses, charities and non-profits, and educational institutions.

### **Local Government:**

While some interviewees and post-event survey respondents expressed concern at a lack of representation from the broader business and government community, others felt that there had been a promising amount of interest from local government, both prior to and immediately following the Reset workshops. This discrepancy could be explained, at least partially, by the fact that potential access to government contracts was a key concern for workshop participants, both in the post-event surveys and in the evaluation interviews. As such, it is likely that Reset workshop participants, and potentially social enterprises in Regional Queensland more generally, have relatively high expectations of local government with regards to their participation and engagement in the social enterprise sector. In Far North Queensland, interest from local government representatives was sufficient for a separate, dedicated information session to be held for them; furthermore, the Rockhampton Upcycle Village project emerged largely as a result of local government participation in the Central Queensland Reset workshop. Interviewees also gave several other examples of local government showing increased interest in social enterprise, including an invitation for one of the Regional Activators to give a presentation to a group of local governments following the Reset workshops. Overall, it is clear that several new and strengthened

relationships between social enterprise and local governments have emerged due to the Reset and Recovery project.

### **Local businesses:**

Eight of 52 organisations that responded to the regional stakeholder surveys identified themselves as being part of the social enterprise support ecosystem, and the majority of respondents that indicated an interest in learning more about social enterprise were also bringing a specific social enterprise idea to the session, rather than seeking more information about the sector in general. Given that the workshops were marketed primarily as an opportunity for social enterprises and (to a lesser extent) the wider ecosystem of customers, suppliers and supporters, it is unsurprising to see this relatively small level of engagement from businesses. On the other hand, each of the projects explored in the Recovery workshops, including the Upcycle Village project, are likely to engage more closely with businesses and other stakeholders in their local areas as their projects progress towards implementation.

# Part Two: Evaluation



## *Strengthened connections and trust between economic actors in regional communities (cont'd).*

### **Charities and non-profits:**

Each of the three regional workshops were attended by representatives from charitable and non-profit organisations, some of which already identified as operating social enterprises. Some participants highlighted the complex and potentially tense sites of interaction between larger, more established charities on one hand, and more locally embedded 'grassroots' social enterprises on the other. This tension reflects a broader theme in the evaluation process, wherein a significant minority of participants expressed antipathy towards those whom they perceived as representing the interests of economically powerful actors, or who were seen to engage in regional Queensland communities without sufficient knowledge or experience of what those communities wanted and needed. Rather than seeing these expressions as representing localist or parochial attitudes, we suggest that it is more helpful to understand them as strategies for setting boundaries, defining the specific types of social enterprise activity that are desirable, and expressing the need for outside actors to respect the particular character and circumstances of regional communities.

### **Universities and other educational institutions:**

The involvement of CQUni in designing and delivering the Reset and Recovery workshops can itself be seen as a strengthening of relationships between the social enterprise sector and educational institutions, particularly with regards to Central Queensland where the university is located. Recovery participants highlighted the ongoing nature of their relationship with CQUni following the program, including being given access to the online iActivate course for emerging social entrepreneurs, and being provided some ongoing informal advice by CQUni staff. Furthermore, the Far North Queensland Reset workshops were hosted at the Cairns Institute of James Cook University, although it is unclear whether this engagement contributed to a stronger relationship with the university or its staff.



*Reset workshop participants, FNQ*

# Part Two: Evaluation



## 2.3.4. Formation of local groups capable of progressing and implementing identified opportunities.



**Data quality**



**Progress to date**

Data to support this output was drawn from Regional Activator reports and Recovery participant interviews. Based on the information available, we are reasonably confident that some progress has been made toward this output, with more time needed to see some of the early-stage local groups develop their enterprise management capabilities.

As of June 2021, there are five local groups which have been formed to progress and implement the opportunities explored during Reset & Recovery. While most of these groups had already been initiated in some form before the program, for the purposes of this evaluation we will present their post-program developments in group maturity, direction or format, and broadly attribute those effects to the Reset & Recovery program. The following developments have occurred in the period following QSEC's Reset & Recovery workshops;

- The employment-creation horticulture project in Darling Downs has seen a wider range of workers and volunteers from host entity Base Services engaged in the project after attending Reset & Recovery workshop sessions. This has led to a more distributed and team-based approach, with multiple teams at Base Services now actively engaged in developing the social enterprise concept.
- The founding director of Upcycle CQ has decided to hand over more control and ownership of the project to its intended beneficiaries, specifically by handing over more responsibilities to young people and developing pathways for them to become board members of the organisation.
- Central Queensland-based organisation Strong Communities used the Reset and Recovery workshops as an opportunity to reaffirm their direction and focus, creating renewed energy for their 2021 strategic

planning process. They were also able to develop a business plan for their proposed Employee Assistance Program social enterprise, which was presented to the organisation's directors and incorporated into the strategic plan.

- In Rockhampton, CQUni has begun holding co-design meetings with stakeholders interested in the development of an 'Upcycle Village', a process which is intended to lead to the formation of a new group to drive the initiative forwards.
- In Far North Queensland, Sandi Taylor's concept of a housing services provider built on sustainability and grassroots economic development principles is currently setting up an informal 'critical friends' group.

As these examples show, the groups that are forming in response to social enterprise opportunities identified during Reset & Recovery are at varying stages of development, and have varying levels of capability to progress and implement their projects. However, it is also clear that the Reset & Recovery project has produced tangible and positive benefits for each group, with progress being made towards formalisation, skill-building and distribution of responsibilities.

# Part Two: Evaluation



## 2.4. Outcome Evaluation

### 2.4.1. New connections between SEs working within and between Queensland's regions.



**Data quality**



**Progress to date**

Data to support this output was drawn from Regional Activator reports, participant interviews, and post-event participant surveys.

Based on the information available, we are confident that this output has been substantively achieved, although it is outside the scope of the evaluation to provide feedback on the number, type and quality of these new connections.

In quantitative terms, 15 of 16 respondents to the Reset workshop post-event survey indicated that they would be interested in ongoing engagement with this, and other similar projects. Thirteen of 15 participants in Reset and Recovery evaluation interviews agreed that the opportunity to network, connect and share knowledge was one of the most valuable outcomes of the Reset workshops. Furthermore, there were several specific examples in the evaluation interviews where social entrepreneurs had met through Reset & Recovery, and were still in semi-regular contact at the time of interviewing.

There is also some evidence that the Reset & Recovery project has led to the strengthening and/or re-activation of existing groups, with interviewees indicating that they had seen renewed interest in the social enterprise networks of Darling Downs and Central/ West Queensland following the Reset workshops. Finally, each of the Regional Activators noted that they felt a stronger connection between their regional social enterprise network and QSEC as a result of the project.



Reset workshop participants, Darling Downs

# Part Two: Evaluation



## 2.4.2. Wider public and private sector stakeholders are engaged in the new projects and are supporting their development.



**Data quality**



**Progress to date**

Data to support this output was drawn from Regional Activator reports and interviews, Recovery facilitator interviews, and recovery participant interviews. Based on the information available, we have a reasonable degree of confidence that some progress has been made towards this output, with more time needed to see what kinds of concrete and material support are given to the new projects, and more time needed for some of the early-stage projects to reach a point where they are ready to seek out external support.

The extent to which wider public and private stakeholders are engaged in the new projects developed through Reset & Recovery will largely depend on the developmental stage of each project, with some project leaders feeling at the time of writing that their projects required more development before presenting them to a broader group. Furthermore, where the projects are housed within existing entities (Base Services and Stronger Communities), it is likely that stakeholders will be existing contacts of the parent organisation, making the new relationships difficult to attribute to QSEC's efforts. On the other hand, there are some specific examples where new projects have attracted significant support from wider stakeholders, most notably the Rockhampton Upcycle Village, which has been successful in securing funding to engage in a co-design process with a wide range of stakeholders including Rockhampton Regional Council, Waste management businesses, waste generators (households, industries, agriculture), Queensland and Commonwealth Government representatives, impact investors, philanthropists, non-profits and community groups.

Several Reset program participants also mentioned that they planned to seek accreditation through Social Traders, potentially giving them access to a significant pool of social procurement customers, but it was not possible to determine whether these participants ultimately completed the accreditation process. On the whole, perhaps the most important contribution that QSEC has made to this output has been to encourage participants to clearly identify which stakeholders to approach, and equip them with the skills to do so. Based on the interviews with Recovery project participants, it is clear that this has been a valued part of the workshops, and as such, it is possible that further progress towards this output will occur as each of the five projects progresses.

*“There was some real networking and community building, and connecting with local figures like the chamber of commerce and local businesses”*

*- Angharad Lubbock, Darling Downs Regional Activator*

# Part Two: Evaluation

## 2.4.3. Case studies that can inform replication and expansion of the approach.



Data quality



Progress to date

Data to support this output was drawn from Recovery facilitator and participant interviews, Regional Activator reports, and Recovery workshop outputs (including photographs, scans, PowerPoint slides and other participant-generated artefacts). Based on the information available, we have a high degree of confidence that this output has been achieved, with the data sources above providing Yunus Centre evaluators with sufficient material to develop three case studies of social enterprise concepts at varying stages of maturity and development. These case studies, along with a summary of some suggestions for further replication and expansion of the approach taken by Reset and Recovery, can be found in Part Three below.

## Outcome Evaluation

### *New and sustainable SEs operating in Queensland's regions*

As of June 2021, there are at least five emerging social enterprise initiatives in Regional Queensland with direct ties to the Reset & Recovery project. It is also possible that the 'ripple effect' of QSEC's injection of support into the regional social enterprise ecosystem will result in the creation of more social enterprise opportunities, and that QSEC's ongoing efforts to support regional social enterprises following Reset & Recovery will enable these opportunities to be developed into viable enterprises. At the same time, it is important to recognise that social enterprises are subject to the same market forces as other small-to-medium businesses, and as such, are likely to experience failure/ shutdown rates of approximately 60% in their first three years of operation<sup>2</sup>. This serves to highlight the importance of providing ongoing support programs such as Reset & Recovery, and the importance of QSEC's role more generally as a source of ongoing learning, sector-building support, and networking for new and emerging enterprises.

While social enterprises have been recognised as a potential vehicle for regional economic development<sup>3</sup>, their chances of success are greatly improved with access to

appropriately skilled and resourced local intermediaries who can guide the process of enterprise development and leverage the social capital of communities to establish new enterprises as 'embedded' regional actors<sup>4</sup>. QSEC's attentiveness to local needs, opportunities and networks is an example of how such a process can work using a combination of national, state and local expertise - albeit with limited timeframes and resources, and under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initial successes of Reset & Recovery, which include supporting five social enterprise concepts in their early stages of development, helping regional entrepreneurs to form local groups, create new connections within and between social enterprises, strengthen relationships and trust between actors, and engage wider public and private sector stakeholders in emerging social enterprises, suggest that the Reset & Recovery model will ultimately make a considerable long-term contribution to the development of new and sustainable social enterprises in Regional Queensland, and furthermore, offers significant value as a template for ongoing social enterprise support efforts in Regional Queensland and beyond.

# Part Two: Evaluation

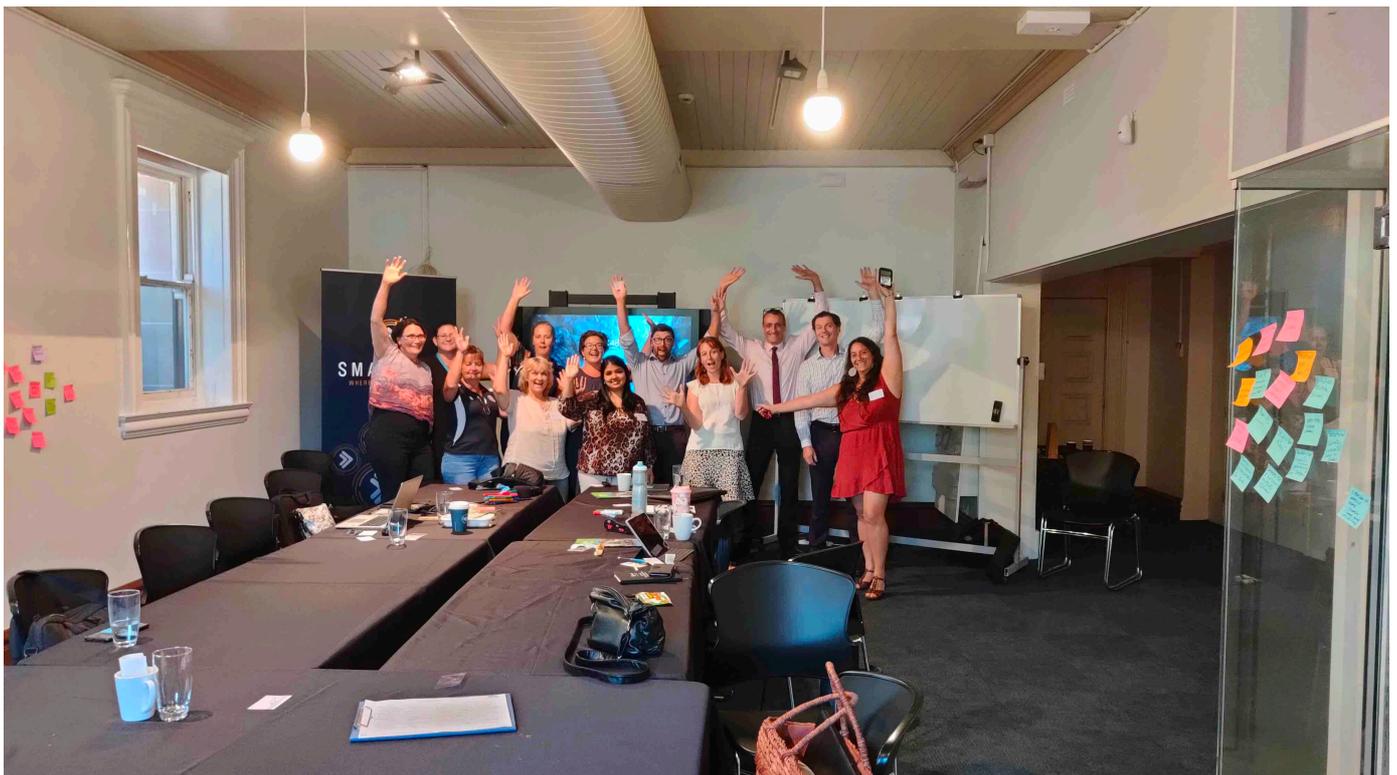
## 2.4.4. Potential for new jobs and decent work for local communities

The extent to which Reset & Recovery contributes meaningfully to this outcome depends on the success of those social enterprise initiatives which were supported through the program. If the Reset & Recovery program is ultimately successful in supporting the development of additional social enterprises in Regional Queensland, it is likely that new jobs and quality work opportunities will result; research shows that social enterprises produce better employment outcomes than mainstream employment services for people experiencing disadvantage, are as efficient (and in some cases, more efficient) than their commercial

counterparts, and produce significant social returns in the communities where they operate. As such, while it will be challenging to meaningfully attribute long-term changes in regional job markets to the actions of QSEC today, there is no doubt that ongoing support and coordination of regional social enterprise efforts will eventually result in local communities securing new jobs and decent work, particularly where enterprises are grounded in the genuine needs of their communities, and are able to access ongoing support through networks and partnerships such as QSEC.

*“(The Reset & Recovery project)... has been really beneficial in terms of helping people to design social enterprises that actually have some longevity in them. And not just a flash in the pan idea. I'm really, really happy with that with the work that we've done.”*

*- Steve Williams, CQUni*



Reset workshop participants, Central Queensland

# Part Two: Evaluation



## 2.4.5. Improved social and economic outcomes in regional Queensland.

As with the other long-term outcomes of this project, improvements in social and economic outcomes are likely to emerge over a long period of time, and will be difficult to attribute directly to the actions of QSEC. Research suggests that social enterprise can be a significant factor in improving social and economic outcomes in regional areas, particularly when a collaborative, place-based and co-production approach is taken. In particular, social enterprises are often able to offer essential services, including health care, homelessness services and supported employment, when traditional for-profit businesses and government services are not able to<sup>5</sup>.

At an individual level, a recent study of four employment-creation social enterprises in regional Australia cities showed that, beyond the immediate benefits of creating job opportunities for people facing disadvantaged, social enterprises create ‘spaces of wellbeing’ in which employees have the opportunity to develop personal and social capital at a number of different levels (see Barraket et. al. 2021, quote in breakout box).

The economic contribution of social enterprises to regional areas is also potentially significant, as, like other businesses, they are likely to generate economic activity in their communities through local purchasing practices, the flow-on effects of paid employment, and the revitalisation of town centres.

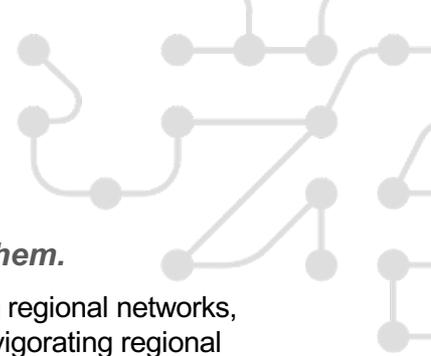
While it is difficult to meaningfully demonstrate Reset & Recovery’s direct contributions to this outcome, the evidence is clear that social enterprise activity in general is a positive influence on rural and regional communities; as such, QSEC’s contributions to the number, type and diversity of social enterprises in regional Queensland can also be seen as a contribution to improved social and economic outcomes in the long run.

### Social enterprises and wellbeing in regional Australia (from Barraket et. al. 2021)

*“Holistic wellbeing... is developed by social enterprises through:*

- *material wellbeing, such as providing income where job opportunities are usually low*
- *occupational wellbeing, through providing a sense of achievement and enjoyment in work*
- *social wellbeing, through the development of relationships*
- *community wellbeing, such as the development of a sense of belonging and shared purpose*
- *physical wellbeing, such as learning the skills to live a healthy life*
- *psychological wellbeing, such as the calmness of certain types of work.”*

# Part Two: Evaluation



## 2.4.6. Stronger regional SE networks and collaboration between them.

As the state-wide representative body for social enterprise, QSEC plays a central role in contributing to the strength of regional networks. Of particular note is the fact that QSEC has actively supported and encouraged the formation of regional sub-networks to advance social enterprise within their specific areas. The Reset & Recovery project's initial successes in building connections between SEs working within and between Queensland's regions, as well as supporting the formation of local groups capable of progressing and implementing identified opportunities, suggests that they are making measurable progress towards this outcome. In particular, the contribution of Regional Activators to engaging

new social enterprises in regional networks, and in some cases re-invigorating regional networks that had become less active, is an indication that the Reset & Recovery approach could provide a template for further efforts to strengthen regionally focussed social enterprise networks and communities. At the same time, it is important to recognise the ongoing role that QSEC will play in coordinating overall sector development, leveraging support from State and Federal Government, and ensuring that geographically separated social enterprise networks are able to continue working in collaboration with each other on shared projects of national and state significance.

## 2.5. Participant Feedback

As part of the participant feedback and interview process, respondents were invited to identify potential areas for improvement in the Reset & Recovery program. The following recommendations are drawn from participant surveys and evaluation interviews (including Regional Activators, Reset & Recovery participants, and project partners). Unless otherwise stated, they reflect themes that emerged across multiple interviews, rather than the feedback of any one person:

- Although there was strong support among all stakeholders for the locally tailored approach to workshop development, many also reflected that more lead-time would have helped Regional Activators and other presenters to prepare more regionally specific content. The quick-response nature of Reset & Recovery made this impractical, but in any future initiatives of this kind, it would be valuable to consider bringing Regional Activators onboard earlier in the project, while also increasing the amount of local content provided at workshops.
- The role of Regional Activators was received very positively, with a significant majority of interviewees expressing a desire for these roles to be ongoing, rather than limited to a single project. The overwhelming sentiment was that the Regional Activators were able to achieve a significant amount in terms of network development and sector-building in a relatively short space of time, and that further support and funding in this area would be a significant benefit for social enterprises in regional Queensland.
- The relationships of trust developed by QSEC, and specifically by CEO Elise Parups, were integral to the effective rollout of this project. A consistent theme in the interviews was a general feeling that most social enterprise support initiatives were tailored towards the needs of urban and city-based social enterprises, and that it was relatively uncommon for anybody to take QSEC's approach of engaging, listening and responding to each region's particular needs and priorities. As such, while it is true that the Reset & Recovery program could be a template for future social enterprise support initiatives, it is unlikely that such a program would meet with similar success if those relationships of trust were not already present.

### Footnotes for Part Two:

1. Christie, C. A., & Alkin, M. C. (2003). The User-Oriented Evaluator's Role in Formulating a Program Theory: Using a Theory-Driven Approach. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 24(3), 373–385.  
2. Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education 2012, *Australian Small Business Key Statistics and Analysis*, Commonwealth of Australia 2012.

3. Kim, D., & Lim, U. (2017). Social Enterprise as a Catalyst for Sustainable Local and Regional Development. *Sustainability*, 9(8). doi:10.3390/su9081427

4. Steiner, A., & Teasdale, S. (2019). Unlocking the potential of rural social enterprise. *J Rural Stud*, 70, 144-154.

doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.12.021  
5. *ibid.*

# Part Three: Case Studies

## 3.1. Sandi Taylor, Far North Queensland: Developing sustainable housing for First Nations people

Sandi Taylor is a Kalkadoon, Ngnwun and Jirandali woman from north-west Queensland. She is an experienced community development practitioner of over 30 years, with an ethos of building, affirming and validating personal and community empowerment, which is the corner stone to strengthening and sustaining personal and community social and emotional wellbeing. Sandi's project is based on her understanding of the challenges of meeting the social and cultural health needs of First Nations people, particularly with lived experience of mental ill-health and associated socio-economic wellbeing issues. Due to a complex range of factors - including historical dispossession of lands, institutionalised racism, everyday discrimination, and government policy decisions - First Nations people face significant barriers to being able to live in a place of their choosing, particularly on Country.

Sandi's social enterprise concept is based on two fundamental principles; firstly, the belief that community empowerment and self-determination is the key to addressing these intergenerational and systemic problems. Secondly, that a sustainability-orientated approach to economic development and wellbeing can be built on the principles of

'Donut Economics', a holistic approach to social and economy development that re-frames the economy as activity that should occur within the boundaries of sustainability and human wellbeing (see Figure 3).

Applying these two principles, Sandi is seeking to pilot a Social Enterprise start-up lab that would be mobile and could be set up on Country to support affordable eco-housing models utilising locally sourced soils and flora materials, 3D printing technology, and other appropriate recycling technology. According to Sandi's Theory of Change, when shelter and accommodation needs are met, there will be more capacity for individuals and their families to improve other health determinants, and to actively engage in social and economic development on their own terms. This social enterprise concept would represent a significant and innovative contribution to the housing affordability space, with the potential to develop technologies based on sustainable and recycled materials that could service a wide range of sustainability-focussed customers, with income streams supporting further low-cost housing on Country.

### Doughnut Economics (Raeworth 2021)

*"The environmental ceiling consists of nine planetary boundaries... beyond which lie unacceptable environmental degradation and potential tipping points in Earth systems. The twelve dimensions of the social foundation are derived from internationally agreed minimum social standards, as identified by the world's governments in the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.*

*Between social and planetary boundaries lies an environmentally safe and socially just space in which humanity can thrive"*

From <https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/>

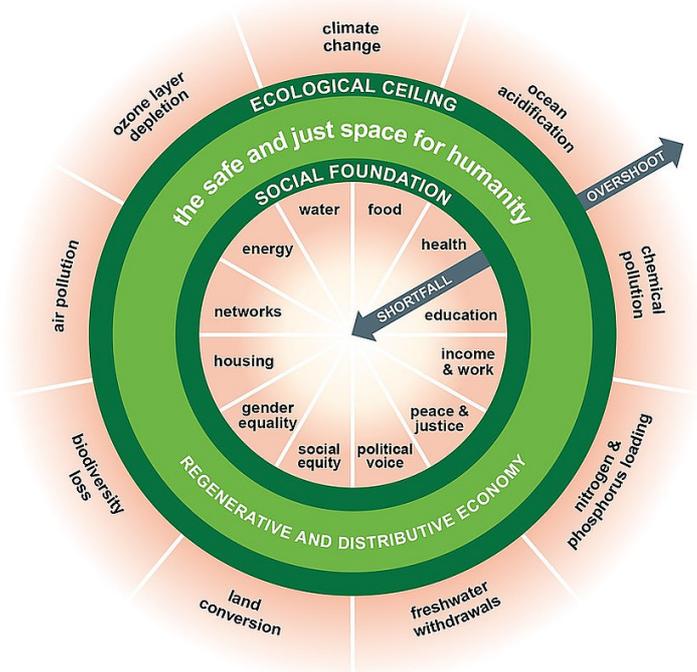


Figure 3: Doughnut Economics framework

# Part Three: Case Studies

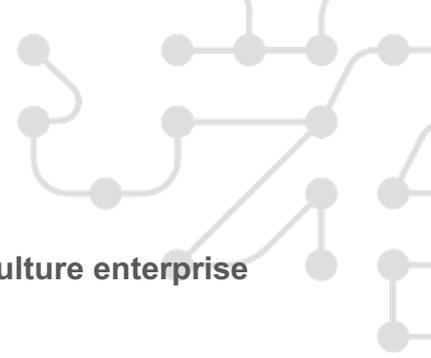


## Sandi Taylor, Far North Queensland: Developing sustainable housing for First Nations people (cont'd)

During the Recovery ideation workshops, CQUni staff worked closely with Sandi to refine her social enterprise concept from an ambitious and high-level concept to a series of detailed project documents and implementation steps. For Sandi and the CQUni staff, the key challenge was how to go through this process without losing the complexity, nuance and scale of Sandi is trying to achieve. Based on the work done in the Recovery Ideation workshops, it has become clear that the most effective and strategic next step for the social enterprise is to undertake a research and development project that builds the social, environmental and economic case for the work to be piloted in an Indigenous community. Over the next few years, Sandi plans to develop relationships with other stakeholders - including government representatives, researchers, local community services and potential funders. At the same time, she will be working to develop the community reference groups and relationships with pilot communities that will allow the concept to be piloted, tested and costed for business-base development and investor pitching in approximately three years.

*“The theory of change gave me the opportunity to really sit and think and sift through my thinking, and what was plausible and what wasn't. I'm still using that as my guiding post... the framework to progress what I need to progress” - Sandi Taylor*

# Part Three: Case Studies



## 3.2. BASE Services, Darling Downs: Employment-focussed horticulture enterprise

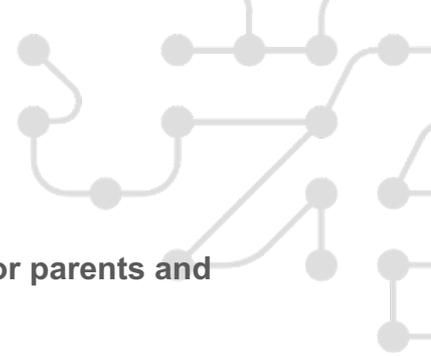
BASE Services is a non-profit community development organisation in Toowoomba. They have operated since 1993, assisting individuals, families and children experiencing or at a high risk of homelessness. While this has always been a challenge, since October 2020 they have noticed an increase in homelessness, including many who are experiencing homelessness for the first time. One of the drivers for this is the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on low-income earners, and the widespread housing affordability crisis across Australia. With this in mind, BASE Services' social enterprise concept was to help break the cycles of homelessness and unemployment by purchasing and developing a short-stay tourist accommodation facility into a transitional housing facility for people who are struggling to find shelter, which would also incorporate the potential for paid employment through cleaning, gardening and landscaping of the 11-acre property.

During the Recovery ideation workshop, the CQUni team worked with Tiff Spary (coordinator and social worker at BASE Services) to develop an understanding of the proposed social enterprise from a viability, validity and feasibility perspective. Over the course of the workshop, it was decided to separate the original idea into two distinct proposals; an accommodation services enterprise, and an employment creation enterprise. Given the amount of bureaucracy and regulatory compliance work needed to set up an accommodation service, it was agreed that the employment-creation enterprise should be pursued first. As such, the main social enterprise concept that emerged from this process was an arm of BASE Services offering training and employment in horticulture (cultivating plants and seedlings) helping individuals to sustain mainstream employment and exit homelessness. At the same time, it was recognised that the direct provision of housing would be an ideal way for BASE Services to help the community, and that the opportunity to purchase a specific piece of land and infrastructure in the future might still be pursued.

Based on the work done at the Recovery ideation workshops, BASE Services have developed a clear pathway to test and implement their employment-focused social enterprise concept, with a Concept Testing Plan designed to increase their understanding of the potential markets for their plants and seedlings, develop a costed proposal for implementing the enterprise under BASE Services, and secure funding to launch the project.

*“As someone who's new to social enterprise, and comes from a social work background rather than business, I just found it really invaluable, really challenged my thinking and helped me.” - Tiff Spary*

# Part Three: Case Studies



## 3.3. Strong Communities, Central Queensland: Specialised EAP for parents and families

Strong Communities is a not for profit social enterprise promoting wellness for children, parents, families and organisations in regional and remote communities. Any profits made from its activities are repurposed back into tackling tough social issues families face. Strong Communities filled the role of Regional Activator for the Reset workshops, and plays an ongoing role in promoting and advocating for social enterprise in the Central Queensland region. One of the key areas Strong Communities seeks to address is the poorer health outcomes and access to services experienced by people who live in rural and remote areas of Australia. Strong Communities' work is based on the principle that people who live in rural and regional Australia (approximately 28% of the population) deserve the same access to health and wellbeing services as people who live in metropolitan areas. In a recent survey they conducted, Strong Communities found that 90% of regional respondents identified that there were not enough parenting support programs and services in their area. This insight led Strong Communities to develop its initial social enterprise concept, which was to provide online parenting programs and mixed-mode programs, including webinar style content and a learning platform with access to multiple programs, resources and activities for parents facing challenging circumstances.

Over the course of the Recovery ideation workshops, CQUni staff worked with Strong Communities co-founders Natalia Muszkat and Charmaine Tolhurst to clearly identify the

intended social and economic benefits of their enterprise idea, along with the wide range of stakeholders who may benefit from their programs. Through this process, they recognised that parenting is an issue which significantly impacts people in the workforce, and that at the same time, employers are increasingly looking for more targeted and tailored Employee Assistance Programs. This led the Strong Communities team to focus their social enterprise concept on building an EAP service specifically for parents facing challenging circumstances, while using the income, expertise and technology developed through this process to offset the cost of offering services to those with limited capacity to pay. In this way, Strong Communities were able to more explicitly articulate and separate out the 'charitable' and 'enterprising' dimensions of their concept.

As an organisation that already operates as a social enterprise, Strong Communities is in a position to move relatively quickly towards implementation of the idea. While the concept had been part of their strategic thinking for some time, the Reset & Recovery program has given Strong Communities the opportunity to rethink the balance between social and financial goals, further refine their product offering, and progress towards launching. The next steps for launching the EAP social enterprise concept are already underway, with an initial trial run already conducted with two customers. This process has given Strong Communities some valuable insights on the needs of customers, as well as some potential ideas for how to structure the different service offerings and price-points.

*“I'm a very big picture person. So (the Recovery workshops) really helped me to drill down and look at the impact that we were having... By focusing on the impact that we wanted to have (and) the outcomes that we wanted to have, how might we build a social enterprise project, more than looking at that charity space?” - Charmaine Tolhurst, Stronger Communities*

# Conclusion and Recommendations



The project team has worked with QSEC to conduct this evaluation of the Reset & Recovery project, drawing on quantitative survey data and in-depth interviews with project participants and stakeholders to understand how the project has contributed to the development social enterprise in regional Queensland, and whether similar projects might be valuable in the future.

QSEC's goals in delivering this project were relatively simple, but the potential for such projects to impact upon regional social enterprise communities is significant, and it is likely that the ongoing impacts of this project will be experienced – and will emerge – over a period of several years. As this evaluation has shown, QSEC's core premise – that an injection of capacity and skills development can empower local communities to develop social enterprise solutions to address the issues they are facing – is one that has been demonstrably successful in regional and rural social enterprise ecosystems around Australia and the world. The initial successes and impacts of the Reset & Recovery program, as outlined in this evaluation, indicate that this approach could be applied by QSEC in other communities and regions, and potentially form the basis for ongoing social enterprise support initiatives in addition to one-off projects.

Based on the results of this evaluation projects, the project team offers the following closing notes and recommendations to inform future project development:

1. The importance of directing support and resources to regional activators, who are themselves skilled social entrepreneurs and well-connected with both their own communities and the broader social enterprise ecosystem, cannot be understated. These groups and individuals, who often play an unrecognised (and unpaid) role in building their local social enterprise communities, are in an ideal position to work closely with state-level peak bodies to coordinate, facilitate and direct support to social enterprises in their local areas.
2. While the critical role of networks and intermediaries in successful social enterprise ecosystems is well-understood, it is also the case that such networks (including QSEC and its various regional networks) can often struggle to adequately resource their work. Acknowledging that this project has been a success at least in part due to the voluntary efforts of key stakeholders, it is recommended that future iterations of this project take these contributions into account, and recognise them with appropriate resourcing where possible. Furthermore, it is recommended that appropriate resourcing be directed to the ongoing support of the five early-stage social enterprises that are emerging as a result of the Reset & Recovery program. Significant momentum and energy for social enterprise activity in regional Queensland has been developed through this project, and ongoing capacity-building and support will help ensure that this momentum translates into viable and impactful enterprises across all the target regions, and that the broader outcome goals of this project can ultimately be realised.
3. Of the five new social enterprise initiatives developed through Reset & Recovery, those with the clearest pathway towards implementation were the ones which have the overarching support and credibility offered by being hosted within, or auspiced by, an existing organisation. As such, in addition to accelerator programs and skills-development initiatives, more opportunities for coordinated financial and practical (i.e. pro and/or low-bono legal) support is still needed for early-stage entrepreneurs who cannot afford to take time away from their current work roles in order to develop their concepts into viable enterprises. If such support was available, it would have a significant impact on the diversity of the social enterprise ecosystem, potentially leading to a wider range of grassroots community-driven initiatives in both rural and urban areas.

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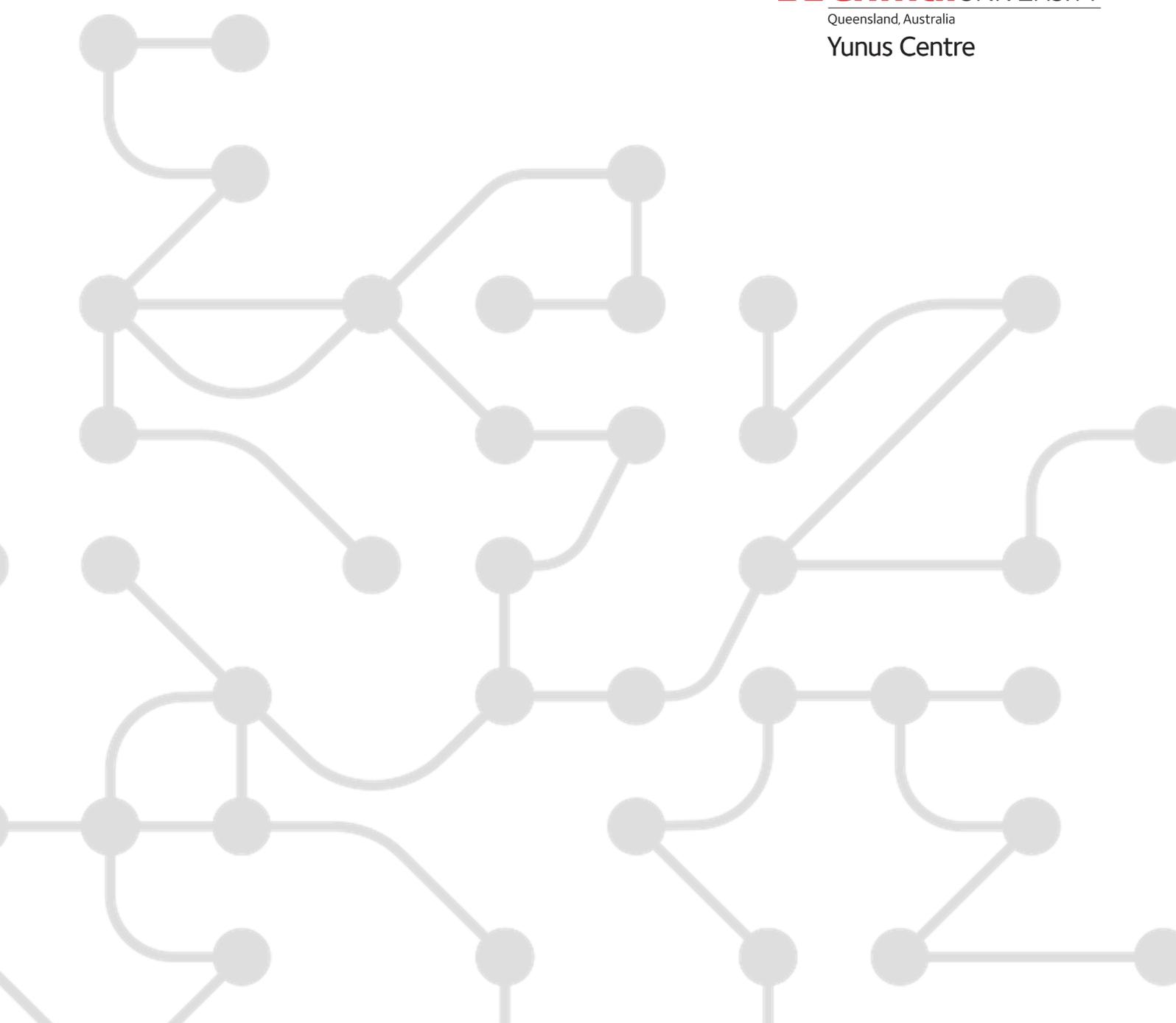
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