

# 2018— 2019

## **ANNUAL REVIEW**

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Changing lives, strengthening  
communities

Fostering employment opportunities  
in rural and regional Queensland

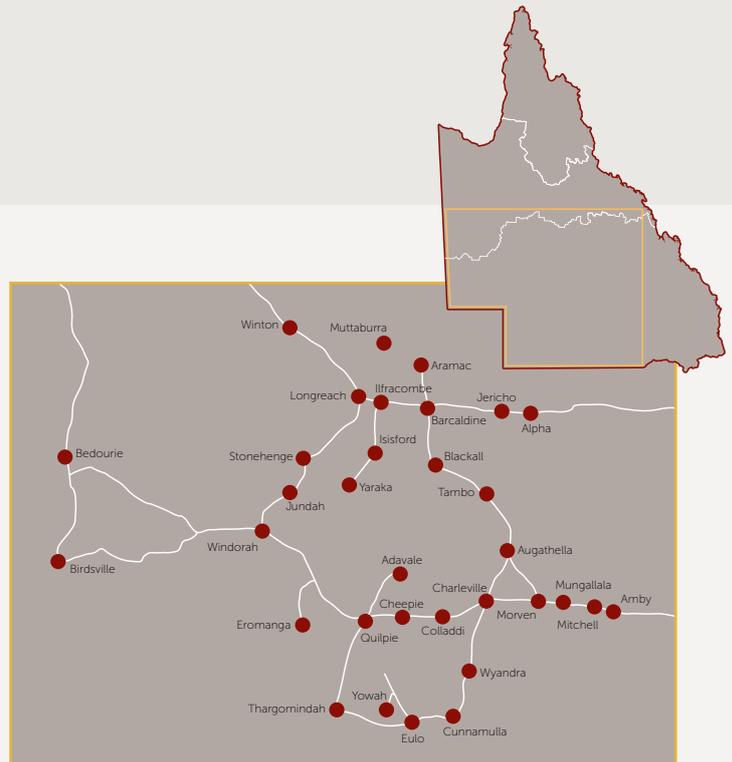
# Our region

**RESQ Plus is the employment service provider for Central West and South West Queensland. These two areas form one of Australia's largest and most diverse geographic regions in which community-based employment services are delivered.**

Our program area covers almost 800,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with approximately 20,000 residents from a variety of cultural backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our work is supported by the eleven surrounding regional councils of Barcaldine Regional Council, Barcoo Shire Council, Blackall Regional Council, Bulloo Shire Council, Diamantina Shire Council, Longreach Regional Council, Maranoa Regional Council, Murweh Shire Council, Paroo Shire Council, Quilpie Shire Council and Winton Shire Council.

Over 35 employees work hard to cover this vast region and its varied employment and training needs. Together, they provide vital support services to 32 communities and over 600 job seekers.



## Board profiles



**Maria Richards**

Chairperson, The MaraWay

Maria Richards has come a long way from her challenging experiences as a schoolgirl. She is now a Director of RESQ Plus and the Chair of The MaraWay in Cairns. Maria is passionate about her culture, her family and the community. She believes if you want something in life, from a car to an education, you have to work for it. A former Community Development Employment Projects (CDPD) participant, Maria used the program as a stepping stone to a better education, job, and life. Maria has a first-hand understanding of the barriers encountered by Indigenous youth. She has been passionately supporting and mentoring the people of her local community all her life. Maria has fostered over 65 children and is determined to use her leadership roles to assist people with embracing life-changing opportunities.



**Janeece Thompson**

Manager, CWAC

Janeece Thompson is a proud Bidjara/Kara Kara Aboriginal woman from Barcaldine in Central Queensland. Over the past 20 years, Janeece has been managing the Central West Aboriginal Corporation (CWAC), an organisation founded by her parents in 1976. Janeece shares the same passion and determination as her parents and original members of CWAC to make a difference in the communities and lives of the people the organisation represents. She has seen many changes, celebrated many successes, and has been guided by the members and community to shape the Corporation into a successful and well-respected organisation. In her new role as a Director of RESQ Plus, Janeece sees an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to sustain economic independence, now and in the future.



**Alicia Gibson**

Chief Executive Officer, Skill Centred Queensland

As a Board Director of RESQ Plus founding partner, Employment Services Queensland (ESQ), and CEO of Skill Centred Queensland, a not-for-profit community-based organisation operating across Queensland, Alicia brings years of experience in organisations supporting long-term unemployed, disadvantaged youth and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. She holds various qualifications, including a Bachelor of Social Welfare (Youth Work) and an Associate Diploma in Welfare Studies. Alicia is currently completing her Masters in Business. She sits on a variety of boards within her local community.

# Message from the Chairman

**On behalf of my fellow Board members and the RESQ Plus team, it's with great pleasure that I present the 2018–2019 Annual Review.**

RESQ Plus is a new joint venture between RAPAD Employment Services Queensland (RESQ) and our two Indigenous partners, Central West Aboriginal Corporation in Barcaldine and The MaraWay in Cairns.

Established in 2018, RESQ Plus builds on the work delivered by RESQ since 2013, strengthened by our new Indigenous partnerships.

With Indigenous ownership and Board representation, we're able to keep growing our services and deliver real job outcomes for our Indigenous clients. Our training programs are targeted to ensure they align with the cultural aspirations of our job seekers.

Across western Queensland, the ongoing drought has seen populations decline in all communities. With people moving away from the area, community organisations have struggled to find volunteer support.

RESQ Plus has actively worked with our communities to identify the priority areas where assistance is required. Our job seekers have supported numerous events in towns throughout the region.

Visitors and residents see our job seekers actively undertaking supervised activities in each town—at showgrounds, pony clubs, museums, churches, schools, cultural sites of significance and town commons. Job seekers are seen assisting with beautification, renovation and general maintenance.

These activities help job seekers build skills, confidence and pride in their local community. And it's through the reward and satisfaction of achieving results that they transition successfully into employment.

This year's Annual Review highlights the success of the Community Development Program (CDP) delivered by RESQ Plus. We celebrate the program in moving job seekers into meaningful employment and contributing to the health of the local community.

I would like to acknowledge everyone who has contributed to the success of our work this financial year. We are deeply grateful to our partners in helping build strong, sustainable communities.

**David Arnold**

*Chief Executive Officer,  
Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) and  
Chairman of RESQ Plus*



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# Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Over the last six years, RAPAD Employment Services Queensland (RESQ) has worked in strong partnership with local Indigenous organisations. Through business mentoring and the provision of plant and equipment, RESQ has helped individuals and groups establish new businesses.

Despite tough economic conditions, these businesses continue to grow in their success, proving that with strong support, it's possible to create sustainable regional businesses.

RESQ has now evolved into a new company—RESQ Plus—delivering greater employment and training outcomes across western Queensland.

RESQ Plus brings together the collective experience of RESQ and our Indigenous partners, Central West Aboriginal Corporation and The MaraWay. Our company has strong community partnerships, regional-based staff and a detailed understanding of job seekers aspirations, goals and barriers.

More than ever, our regional communities need assistance. Over the last 12 months, RESQ Plus has achieved 160 job placements and supported 40 community organisations with local events. The Community Development Program (CDP) is well-placed to support community groups running these events. Together, we can create local experiences that are healthy, socially responsible and culturally rewarding.

While agriculture remains a major economic pillar across western Queensland, local tourism provides the backbone for employment. RESQ Plus endeavours to provide relevant training for job seekers pursuing a career in the tourism industry. One of our most popular courses is barista training, assisting many job seekers in finding work.

Our highly qualified supervisors identify suitable activities in each community, aligning work to meet job seeker goals and support the local community. Under supervision, job seekers gain the skills, confidence and attitude to see them prepared for a new job. Good post-placement support then helps them stay in employment and identify further training opportunities.

The dedicated, professional staff of RESQ Plus enjoy the challenge of working with our clients, as well as the satisfaction in placing people into paid employment and watching their lives change for the better.

## **Tony Rayner**

*Chief Executive Officer, RESQ Plus*



By collaborating with rural and remote communities and their organisations, we've fostered local opportunities, crucial to bringing about real change in supporting employment opportunities.



# Positive outcomes in Barcaldine

## Two long-term job seekers have shown their determination and secured jobs with Barcaldine Regional Council.

Cameron Hoskin and Kevin Mahoney have been in their council roles for almost a year, following participation in the Community Development Program (CDP) offered by RESQ Plus.

Both men fill much-needed labourer positions, tackling anything from stick picking through to traffic control. Training and support have been provided by both RESQ Plus and the Barcaldine Regional Council, ensuring the employees continue to build skills that are relevant to their roles.

Justin Rogers, a council foreman who supervises Cameron and Kevin, speaks highly of their willingness to work and learn.

“They’re hard workers. You can tell them what you need for the day and they get the job done.”

“It’s great that I don’t have to check in all the time. They know what’s expected and go looking for the next job to do.”

Justin said it’s been good to see both men grow into the responsibility given to them on the job.

“They keep themselves busy, whether it’s putting in pegs, marking roads, setting up detours, traffic controlling, putting up signs or spraying lines.

“It’s good to have people that can do it all, and fill in the gaps when you need them.”

## Constructing strong futures

**Mark Hetherington was helping out RESQ Plus crews in Barcaldine when he came across a job listing to work with the Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Indigenous Corporation in Borroloola.**

The Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Indigenous Corporation (Mabunji) was looking for three things in a candidate: a trade qualification in carpentry, previous work experience and a strong work ethic.

Mark applied, interviewed and ticked all the boxes.

Burton Willis, the HR manager for Mabunji, said Mark has become a valued member of their Operations department.

“Mark’s been excellent. He just gets in and gets things done. We need more people like him in the department.”

Mark has more than 50 years’ carpentry experience, but he appreciates how interesting the work is with Mabunji.

In his role, he helps repair and maintain Indigenous housing. Recently, Mark also helped build new units for

the Malandari Aged Care Centre. Burton said Mark’s people skills are as strong as his carpentry skills.

“Mark has a great personality and he says it like it is. He’s straightforward and the communities love working with him.

“All our tradespeople get the opportunity to mentor locals from the community, so they can grow their skills and knowledge.

“The young ones love to work with him—I always see them working next to him with smiles on their faces.”

Mark enjoys that aspect of the job too.

“I show them a few things I know and they teach me a few things they know. They tell me how to avoid stray dogs, the places I can go and can’t go, and they help me get to know the people.

“Local knowledge is important to them and I feel good that they want to share it with me.”

The future is bright for Mark with Mabunji. His 12-month contract date recently approached and the organisation had no hesitation in renewing it.



Mark Hetherington.

# Finding mates at work in Charleville

Strong partnerships between RESQ Plus and employers are proving valuable for job seekers and businesses in South West Queensland.

These relationships extend beyond finding candidates for jobs. Ongoing support and training lead to benefits for everyone involved.

Warrego Rendering, a private rendering company in Charleville, is just one business leveraging the expertise and services offered by RESQ Plus.

Michael O'Brien is the manager at Warrego Rendering. He says getting the right people is essential for their organisation.

"The job is hands-on and physically demanding," said Michael.

"We give our people a fair bit of freedom to do what's needed, so we need people we can trust."

Two recent hires through RESQ Plus, Shane Holley and Wayne Alberts, are proving to be a real asset to Michael's team.

"Shane and Wayne are good team players, which is important here. It's a small team and we need to be able to rely on each other. If someone needs a day off, we need guys who can pick up the slack."

Shane is a forklift driver. He's also in charge of the loading area for Specified Risk Material. He started work at Warrego Rendering in late 2018 after being referred by a relative. RESQ Plus set him up with a pair of work boots and a hat to get him started at his new job.

Since then, RESQ Plus has also provided confined spaces training, which is an important health and safety course for the resources and infrastructure industry.

Wayne started with Warrego Rendering in November 2018. He was originally just passing through Charleville to visit family, but when he decided to extend his stay he had to find work.

RESQ Plus organised an appointment with Warrego Rendering and supplied Wayne with PPE (personal protective equipment) for the job. They also paid for his car registration so he had transport to get to and from work.

Since then, RESQ Plus has helped Wayne get his forklift ticket and confined spaces training.



Comradery from left to right: Shane Holley, Wayne Alberts and Michael O'Brien.

Wayne's role with the business is an important one. He's responsible for ensuring no contaminated product enters the machine. He also performs vital maintenance on the equipment, ensuring that operations can continue.

Wayne says working at Warrego Rendering has been good.

"When you're in full swing, the days fly past. There's plenty to do here. It keeps you busy."

"We've got a good crew. We enjoy what we do. I'm always happy to chip in and help another fellow if he needs it."

Michael has since worked with RESQ Plus to hire five new team members and he appreciates how easy it's been.

"We've developed a long-term relationship with the staff at RESQ Plus, who help us find the best applicants for the task. They also invest in building their skills, offering six-months post-employment support for training and extra qualifications."

"Using the same company makes it easy because they know our minimum requirements and can adapt to our different recruiting requests."

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# Helping youth **grow their dreams**



*Greening the desert with hard work and community heart.*

## Young people are learning you can make something out of anything, through Longreach's Garden of Youth project.

It's no easy feat creating a green space in a dusty, drought-stricken region, but that's exactly what young community members in the area have done.

RESQ Plus has been working with Longreach Regional Council and the Youth Committee to create a garden where young people can feel connected and accomplished. The project uses funding from the Youth Engagement Strategy, bringing life to the ideas of young people in the Longreach community.

Local youth have worked hard to create a natural and pesticide-free space, using recycled items collected from the dump or donated by locals.

The Garden of Youth fills an important gap in the community. For people who don't love sports, or are just looking for something different, it's a place to reap what you sow in all the right ways.

Jade Smith, Business Operations Manager at RESQ Plus, says the garden isn't just about the plants.

"It's really a blank canvas. The idea is that the garden will change with what the youth want.

"Anyone in the community can go there and tend the garden. It's good therapy. And they can also take home some fresh produce."

The garden is a work in progress. At the start of the year, there were only two small gardens with broken irrigation and a few plants.

Now, all the garden beds are filled and the irrigation has been fixed by RESQ Plus job seekers.

Recently, RESQ Plus purchased and planted 50 veggie and fruit trees to help fill the 70-metre-long garden. The organisation also put up shades to make working in the garden more comfortable.

The benefits of these additions are already being enjoyed, with community members working hard to care for, harvest and take home some of the produce.

Looking forward, the gardeners have big plans. They want to make a wheeled, portable shade structure to further protect volunteers from the sun.

They're also looking at putting in turf, shade trees and crusher dust paths to make the space more beautiful and inviting.

With so much hard work going into the garden, it's become a project close to the hearts of anyone turning the soil or tending the plants.

Jade said job seekers enjoy being there and watching their hard work pay off.

"The garden has resonated with people all through the Longreach area. Community members have said the garden is lovely and they commend the good work the job seekers and young people are doing.

"There's always so much work to be done, but from what it was, it's come a long way."

# Strengthening ties for **NAIDOC Week**



*Community comes together for Cunnamulla's NAIDOC family fun day.*



## Community connection was strong for Cunnamulla locals at the annual family fun day held during NAIDOC Week.

More than an exciting outing for the kids, the family fun day is a chance for the community to gather, connect and reflect. Sarah Cavanaugh, Compliance Officer at RESQ Plus, said feedback from Cunnamulla residents is always positive after the event.

“The kids are busy with the activities provided, so the adults can have a conversation.

“It’s a chance for people to come together in a meaningful and positive way.”

The yearly event has been running since RESQ Plus took over the Community Development Program (CDP). Highlights of the day included a jumping castle, buggy rides, boomerang painting and face painting.

Attendees enjoyed the barbeque lunch provided, with local RESQ Plus Department of Human Services agent, Roberta Thomas, cooking up a storm and bringing in chicken curry, sausage curry and johnnycakes.

Around 100 people attended the event this year. This included Elders, RESQ Plus participants, members of different community organisations, and kids from a local kindy.

The family fun day is also a day to give back to the community, with the Cunnamulla Aboriginal Corporation for Health (CACH) coordinating a clothes drive.

The event was rounded off with the launch of the ‘Elders as Storytellers’ video, where Elders and community members throughout Queensland have shared their stories about connecting culture, Country, knowledge and early learning. The kindy kids charmed the crowd, singing a song featured on the video.

Sarah said the cultural connection of a day like this is important for keeping community ties strong.

“Indigenous communities can come together to talk. It gives younger people a chance to speak to the Elders.”

While mainly for locals, the event also draws people from nearby communities, providing an opportunity to celebrate local culture, history and achievements from other areas.

The day ran smoothly, with RESQ Plus job seekers helping set up, pack up and coordinate activities on the day. They also worked throughout the week, pitching in with any other events hosted in the area.

Sarah said the entire community could take pride in their efforts for the fun day.

“The whole Cunnamulla RESQ Plus team and all of our job seekers should be proud of the way the day turned out.

“We had fantastic feedback from attendees.”

RESQ Plus is proud to have the opportunity to work with community members and facilitate events that strengthen connections.

## Local advisory boards shape the future of **Community Development Programs**

In 2019, RESQ Plus set up four community advisory boards across South West and Central West Queensland to help engage people in the Community Development Program (CDP).

The boards, located in Longreach, Cunnamulla, Charleville and Mitchell, work to address regional needs for employment and community activities.

The CDP is the Australian Government's remote employment and community development service. It supports job seekers in remote Australia to build their skills, overcome barriers, and contribute to their communities through a range of flexible activities.

The new boards enable a strong focus on tailoring these activities to specific regional needs. The role of each board is to provide program suggestions and feedback to RESQ Plus and recommend changes to activities in their area.

Previously, these decisions were made in multi-agency meetings that had a broad range of topics on the agenda.

Tony Rayner, CEO of RESQ Plus, says that this focused approach ensures the CDP gets the attention it deserves.

"When you just focus on one piece of business, it gets everyone's attention and you achieve some good outcomes.

"There have been great benefits come from this initiative already."

One example of this has been seen in Longreach. The Longreach community advisory board identified a gap in supporting students transitioning from high school to employment. RESQ Plus is now working with providers in the area to ensure there are adequate programs in place to help young people at this critical stage.

These external providers include organisations like the Department of Education and Queensland Police Service.

RESQ Plus has also been working with groups in the Longreach community to connect youth with initiatives and facilities like the Garden of Youth (see page 7), gym and fitness providers, and the council park.

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These boards are empowering community members to drive change for young people and job seekers in their region.

The community advisory boards have also contributed to local council reconciliation action plans, putting forward ideas that meet regional priorities. Some outcomes of this collaboration include:

- An Indigenous theme for the new residential park in Longreach.
- A TAFE Skills for Education and Employment program for Indigenous job seekers in Mitchell. The program allows job seekers to obtain a Certificate II in Rural Operations with tailored support to overcome Language Literacy and Numeracy barriers.
- Hosted placements with Murweh Shire Council to provide job seekers with real work experience in Charleville. This experience provides participants with a potential lead to full-time employment.

The composition of the boards is key to ensuring strong recommendations are made for each area. A RESQ Plus member chairs each board, with other board members being drawn from local community groups, Indigenous organisations and educational facilities.

Each board also includes people living with disability and a young job seeker or high school leaver. This ensures a diverse range of perspectives.

Tony said the boards are a promising step forward for the future of these communities.

"The local engagement we've seen has been fantastic. These boards are empowering community members to drive change for young people and job seekers in their region.

"RESQ Plus is very proud to be working alongside the people in these communities to improve outcomes for people participating in the CDP."



## Believing in better futures

### Blackall RESQ Plus employee Cecele Pitt dedicates her time to helping others.

In her role as an employee consultant, Cecele supports a caseload of job seekers who are working or volunteering to meet Centrelink requirements.

Cecele works hard to arrange opportunities for her clients and overcome any barriers they face in getting to work. She helps any way she can, lining up PPE and uniforms, connecting them with mental health support, or simply being a kind ear.

"I love my job. It's different every day.

"I try to make a difference for people who don't know where to go and get help."

Cecele also works a couple of hours each day as a Department of Human Services agent.

"It's a 400 km round trip to the nearest Centrelink office, so I try to make sure people don't have to make that long journey."

Education forms a large part of this role. Cecele helps people learn to use Centrelink's self-service tools, making sure they achieve the outcomes they need.

She happily sits with any person until they're comfortable or have gotten the job done, and many people are grateful for face-to-face support.

It's this appreciation that drives her to go above and beyond every day.

"I remember one case where a young school leaver was struggling to meet her hours. When I found out about a full-time job with the local council, I knew it would be perfect for her, so I helped her apply online.

"Within days she had the job and she was so grateful. She still pops in some days to say g'day after work."



*Cecele Pitt, RESQ Plus Employee Consultant and Department of Human Services Agent.*

## No obstacle too big in Cunnamulla

### There's always a way. That's how Roberta Thomas, a Department of Human Services (DHS) agent with RESQ Plus in Cunnamulla, sees the world.

A former job seeker herself, Roberta has spent the past two years working with RESQ Plus, helping others in that same situation. As a DHS agent, she spends her days answering questions, teaching people how to set up and use self-service options with Centrelink, and assisting with document uploads.

There's never a dull moment for Roberta, with anywhere from four to twelve people relying on her expertise each day. And there's no question too difficult for Roberta to tackle.

She enjoys providing individual assistance to help people streamline the process and get the support they're entitled to as quickly as possible. And everyone's welcome to drop by for a chat.

"I like responding to people's needs and helping them out.

"We don't turn anyone away. We help anyone who comes in, even tourists."

The job has its challenges. Some people don't know how to use a computer, while others have no mobile phone or email account. Roberta recalls a particularly challenging case, helping a man get his payments reinstated.

"He was having problems proving his identity. With no money and no car, he'd been told to walk 200 km to the nearest office."

This wasn't an option, so Roberta worked out of hours to get his identity verified from Cunnamulla. His payments began again the following day. Going that extra mile is easier when the work is so rewarding. Roberta gets as much as she gives to her job.

"I love my job. The hours are flexible for me, which means I can still pick up my kids from school and spend time with my family."



*Roberta Thomas, RESQ Plus Department of Human Services Agent.*

## Blackall region celebrates with art and culture

The outback exploded with festivity to celebrate the Blackall–Tambo region’s 150th birthday in the second half of 2018.

Regional food and wine tastings, street parties, art and cultural displays, BBQ cook-offs, billy cart races, colour runs and a commemorative ball meant there was something for everyone to enjoy.

In the lead up to the ten-day event, RESQ Plus partnered with Red Ridge (Interior Queensland) to help beautify the main street of Blackall.

Job seekers showed off their artistic talent, creating public art installations from plain and barbed wire.

Some of the pieces, including wire dogs and sheep, have become major features of the town, highlighting the quality of work created for the event.

The Blackall RESQ Plus crew attended an art workshop with Milynda Rogers from Scrapmetalsheila, who was amazed by how quickly the job seekers picked up the process.

Since the event, more art programs have been offered to job seekers, providing an outlet to express their creativity and an opportunity to build new skills.

Gerard Bell, RESQ Plus Supervisor, said the artwork was a great initiative to celebrate the region’s milestone anniversary.

“It’s wonderful to have these pieces around to enjoy and remind us of the town coming together.”



Wire dogs, sheep and balls decorate the roof of a local Blackall business.

## Conversations over carrots

Charleville’s South West Retirement Village will soon celebrate the official opening of a new garden space, where residents can gather, grow veggies and enjoy the weather.

The garden features three vegetable gardens, a flower bed, several fruit trees and covered shelters.

And there’s more to look forward to, with plans to build a chicken coop and barbecue.

RESQ Plus is helping create this special space. John Bursle, Lead Supervisor in Charleville with RESQ Plus, and his team of job seekers undertook early evaluations and costing, as well as provided labour to bring the vision to life.

The crew installed an irrigation system so residents won’t need to worry about watering the garden. They also teamed up with a local work camp to build and install a custom-made, hexagonal table that can be accessed by people using wheelchairs and walking frames.

Annie Liston, Mayor of Murweh Shire and President of the South West Retirement Village, said residents are already enjoying the garden.

“Some people have already started growing carrots, and anyone who wants some can just help themselves.”

She thanks RESQ Plus for their help in establishing the new area for the community.

“The team worked tirelessly and it looks amazing. I can’t speak highly enough about RESQ Plus.

“This garden gives our residents an opportunity for social interaction—a place they can come outside for a yarn. It empowers them to stay independent for as long as possible, which is a wonderful outcome.”



Building garden beds that build connections.

## Room for roos to grow



*Kangaroo orphans thrive in their new enclosure built by RESQ Plus participants.*

### Kim Palmer is a wildlife carer who specialises in helping kangaroos and wallaroos.

The Muttaborra local first started caring for injured and orphaned wildlife 25 years ago and hasn't looked back.

Since the night her son brought home an orphaned grey kangaroo joey, Kim has been caring for macropods in her home, supporting their eventual return into the wild.

When the nearest release site became too full for new additions, Kim reached out to RESQ Plus for help.

Kaylah Smith and Jade Smith from RESQ Plus put Kim's case forward for work under the Community Development Program (CDP). And while it was an unusual project for RESQ Plus, the committee came on board.

RESQ Plus job seekers from Muttaborra, Longreach, Blackall and Winton transformed Kim's entire backyard into a 2400 m<sup>2</sup> enclosure, specifically designed for the vulnerable orphans.

The large enclosure features a six-foot wire fence to protect the animals from predators. Inside, a smaller enclosure houses roos that are injured or need to be quarantined.

Before this space, Kim could only care for six macropods at a time, driving them to the release site at the six-kilogram mark.

She can now keep young ones until they reach 12 kilograms and care for around 18 animals at any time.

Kim said she'd be lost without the enclosure now.

"Without the support of RESQ Plus, there'd be a lot of little joeys with nowhere to grow up. Lots of lives are being helped by this. And lots more to come."

## Golf course restored to glory

The Charleville Golf Course has undergone major restoration works as part of a five-year program of work provided by RESQ Plus.

Membership was steadily dropping for the 18-hole course, due to the drought and difficulty maintaining the grounds.

In particular, the nine sand greens had fallen into disrepair, with minimal staff available to keep them in shape for play.

With the support of RESQ Plus job seekers, major improvements have been made to the course over the past year. Sprinkler systems and sand bunkers have been added to ease the ongoing burden of maintenance.

The ultimate goal was to attract golfing competitions back to the area and boost tourism. This has already started to come to fruition with the course recently hosting the Downs and Southwest Championships.

Eighty-five ladies visited the town to compete—a feat which would never have been achieved without the hard work of RESQ Plus participants.

The course also hosted the Outback Queensland Masters. Thanks to the quality of the course, the event has already been secured again for next year.

John Bursle, Lead Supervisor at RESQ Plus, said restoration and maintenance works have been beneficial for both the community and Work for the Dole participants.

"Job seekers learn a range of greenkeeping skills, such as using ride-on mowers, operating machines for green care, gardening, irrigation systems and tractor driving."

Clifford Jones, President of the Golf Committee, said the program has been a lifesaver for the club.

"It's just phenomenal what they've been doing out there. It's been a godsend for us."

He said the course is also used to run charity days, raising money for people in the area doing it tough.

"This makes the crew from RESQ Plus an integral part of our community. And I'm not overstating that."

# Communities rally to find beauty within the drought

*Finding beauty within the drought: a celebration of art, fashion and enduring spirit.*



Ordinary objects and regular people were transformed for far more than an evening through the Dress the Central West event.

Dress the Central West took locals on a journey designed to inspire, engage and empower people through tough times of the ongoing drought.

The challenge? To find beauty in the worst conditions. The initiative gave Central West Queensland residents an outlet to express themselves creatively through garment design, modelling, dancing, hair and makeup.

Coordinated by local arts and culture organisation Red Ridge (Interior Queensland), the event was made possible by the strong collaborative efforts of RESQ Plus, the Central West Hospital and Health Service, the Blackall–Tambo Neighbourhood Centre, and the Central West Aboriginal Corporation.

The six-month initiative kicked off with community workshops, where people could learn and practise their creative skills. These ongoing efforts culminated in three spectacular performances held in Longreach, Blackall and Barcaldine throughout May and June 2019.

Louise Campbell, Manager at Red Ridge (Interior Queensland) said the event was well received around the community.

“The general feedback was ‘wow!’. There was a lot of enthusiasm from the community.

“One of the people who attended told me it was the best night he’s had in a long time. He even said it was better than sitting at home watching football!”

The performances featured a fashion parade, showcasing 33 pieces of high-fashion, wearable art, all modelled by locals. These pieces were made from locally-sourced, recycled materials, such as bull feed bags, raw wool, bailing twine and tyres—tough objects finding a new life of beauty, symbolic of the resilience of the community.

Alongside the fashions of the night, the audience was treated to a show by the Longreach School of Dance and the Blackall Dance Troupe.

RESQ Plus supported the event, both on stage and behind the scenes. Job seekers from Blackall created wire light balls, which were a major feature of the opening production. The crew was also responsible for transporting the stage and adjusting stage height at each location.

Louise was grateful to have extra hands available throughout the process.

“Throughout the whole event, the RESQ Plus crew were so calm and easy to work with. There were times where I was panicking but Gerard Bell, Supervisor for RESQ Plus, and his team were able to problem-solve on the spot.”

Most importantly, the event has had a positive impact on audiences and job seekers alike. Hardship and adversity caused by drought have been shaping the lives of rural Queenslanders over the past seven years.

“Dress the Central West has allowed people to focus on something other than the drought,” said Louise.

“It shows people they aren’t alone and that it’s important to tackle tough times together. It’s highlighted how we achieve social connectivity through the experience of art—a medium every person can enjoy.”



RESQ Plus job seekers find artistic inspiration in a furry Aussie icon.

## Parade renews support for bilbies

How do you rebuild interest in a local cause? If you're the committee for the Charleville Bilby Festival, you up the ante and host a street parade, complete with custom-built floats.

Last year, the parade attracted more than 30 floats and hundreds of locals and tourists, making it one of the biggest events the town had seen in years.

Local groups got into the spirit, with the ambulance crews, fire department and police all participating in the parade. And with awards for the best-dressed float, the competition was fierce.

RESQ Plus didn't hesitate to get hands-on for the event, creating a float inspired by the region's outback scenery.

The organisation purchased a trailer and built giant bilbies on top, made from timber and painted in life-like colours and Indigenous designs. The RESQ Plus float also featured cut-outs of outback animals, including horses, pigs, cows and dogs.

To top it off, the crew added an oversized fake cake made of cardboard. This creation was later wheeled into the famous 'Fur Ball', with a person dressed in a bilby suit inside, ready to jump out.

John Bursle, RESQ Plus Lead Supervisor, said that his team of job seekers got excited about the project.

"They came up with all the concepts and worked hard to bring them together. Projects like this offer job seekers an opportunity to build skills in other areas, like metalwork and painting."

Emma Liston, former Regional Manager for RESQ Plus, said the float building was beneficial in more ways than one.

"We ended up donating two of the painted bilbies to the Bilby Fund afterwards. They have them at the bilby shop in Charleville for tourists to see.

"It was a really fun concept and it created a bit of chatter in the local community. Our team enjoyed the positive feedback. It encourages them to take more pride in the work they do."

## A place to remember Johnny

Local 'horse whisperer' Johnny Murray grew up in the Mitchell region. Horses were his life. He could take any horse out of the paddock and turn it into a show pony.

It wasn't an unusual sight to see Johnny walking the streets with a horse following him like a dog.

When Johnny passed away late last year, the community approached the Booringa Action Group about creating a memorial.

Money was raised online through a GoFundMe page and RESQ Plus worked with the community to design a metal statue of his last horse, Minnie. The memorial was erected in one of Johnny's favourite spots in the main street, between the bakery and the local FoodWorks.

The laneway memorial will be a place for Mitchell residents to remember Johnny and his love for horses.



Putting the feature screens together for Johnny's Place.

# Building hopes and hearts

## Gerard Bell is dedicated to helping job seekers in the Central West.

The RESQ Plus Supervisor has been with the organisation for six years, offering on-the-job training to people through the Community Development Program (CDP). He teaches a range of skills, including weed spraying, mowing, timber work, leatherwork, burning—anything to help job seekers find purpose and contribute to their community.

Gerard says it's a great program to build employable skills, but it's much more than that.

"It's also about building self-esteem. At first, people don't like coming because they don't want to work for the dole. But then they get going and realise what they can accomplish."

The hands-on work offers an alternative way of learning for people who may not have thrived in traditional education environments.

Gerard works with people ranging from 19 to 50 years old and travels anywhere from 120 km to 300 km away from his Blackall base. Out in the field, it's just Gerard and his team.

"I like getting a smile out of them and seeing them come along in leaps and bounds. They become more confident and then you can give them more responsibility."

He says they've done some interesting projects.

"In Muttaborra, we've built sheds for the council caravan park, renovated church stools, painted the museum, and completed work for the gun club.

"In Aramac, we helped build the community shed. We had to bring extra job seekers across from Longreach and Muttaborra to complete the project.

"Seeing what they've done, they feel proud. It's about offering them experiences so they can build their work ethic."

*Gerard Bell, RESQ Plus Supervisor for Blackall.*



# Investing in local people

## Born and bred in Quilpie, Kel Woodall loves seeing people do what they never dreamed possible.

The RESQ Plus Lead Supervisor has been living in Mitchell for the past 14 years. A boilermaker, diesel fitter and mechanical engineer by trade, Kel now supervises for RESQ Plus through the Community Development Program (CDP). His role is to mentor job seekers, but he also works closely with the community, organising work programs and engaging partners and stakeholders.

Kel enjoys working with the organisation because he believes in investing in local people.

"There are not many jobs in the Mitchell area. The more experience we give our local job seekers, the more chance they have of getting a job when it comes up."

Most of the job seekers working with Kel are being trained in Certificate II in Rural Operations. Kel says he has always had a keen interest in training and learning.

"I like seeing people achieve. I go home in the afternoon thinking I've done a good job because they've learned something. And they go home feeling good about themselves."

In Kel's role, there's an opportunity to build community strength and spirit. He reckons he can't think of any better way to spend his time, aside from chasing cattle around at the farm.

"I could never see myself sitting in an office behind a computer."

Community is key to life in his opinion.

"You can't lose contact with your community. A lot of our funding comes from the people in this area and I can't praise them enough for standing beside us and making it happen."

*Kel Woodall, RESQ Plus Lead Supervisor for Mitchell.*



## Over the last year, Kel and his crew have been involved in:

- ✓ maintaining the Maranoa river walk
- ✓ weed eradication programs across the Yumba and along the Maranoa River
- ✓ maintaining the Yumba, the site of an old Aboriginal camp
- ✓ operating the Maranoa Arts Gateway, a not-for-profit organisation run for volunteers
- ✓ building furniture for local businesses, not-for-profits and the Mitchell Great Artesian Spa complex.



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RESQ Plus is proud to partner with rural and regional organisations, councils, community groups and individuals. From the wide open skies to the long dusty roads, we thank you for your support and commitment to making a positive change.

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