

Community Development & Neighbourhood Centres: A Dialogue: *Summary of Webinar Five*

14/10/2020

This is a short summary of the final of five webinars in which Queensland Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs) explore Community Development (CD). Report prepared for QFCA Community Development Sub-Committee by the Griffith University Research Team.

Further materials can be accessed as below:

Recording of Webinar 5: <https://youtu.be/SwrEGOGP6WM>

QFCA relationships diagram explanation video: <https://youtu.be/r9Yt1kzPU4g>

Forum for continued discussion: <https://www.qfca.org.au/forum/queensland-wide-network/community-development-and-neighbourhood-centres>

Webinar 5 documents and research on the **File Share** page: <https://www.qfca.org.au/file-share>

Webinar 5 Outline

1. Welcome, Overview of progress to date and Purpose
2. Research feedback.
3. Discussion 1. Are there any new conversations in your NCC or Networks as a result of the webinars? From Ownership to Analysis and Structuring.
4. Plenary Discussion – Who is keen to progress the discussions on issues as discussed in Webinar 4?
5. Polls

Welcome, Overview and Purpose

Welcome from QFCA chair, Acknowledgement of Country – as we join the webinar from very different parts of Queensland.

Purpose of Webinar Five: Purpose – Our initial task was “Has CD been lost, is it relevant to today, what would it take to give it new life?” Today is a summing up and looking at where to from here.

There is more happening than we might know about!! Conversations are emerging everywhere – today we will bring it together.

Research overview

The research is documenting the journey to date. This summary is a reminder and will be helpful to those who have missed a webinar.

In Webinar 1 participants agreed with the concern expressed at the CD conference (2019) that both SD and CD are important to NCCs, but SD has become dominant and CD has become a minor practice or in some cases has been lost. People wanted to explore the relevance of CD to current context.

In order to do this, Webinar 1 articulated an understanding of CD which emphasised community members being able to come together as small groups with a similar issue, articulate and act on their issue or unmet aspiration, and reflect together. Already in Web 1 participants began articulating **barriers to CD**, and yet there was widespread agreement that NCCs are the best structure through which local people can act on local concerns.

Webinars 1-3 focused in on the CD approach of eliciting the issues which most concern local people, people building relationships, hearing from each other how the issues impact and ensuring that the processes build the local people's **ownership**, working towards agreement to work together and to pursue public world change.

A number of stories illustrated the steps and stages of building local ownership.

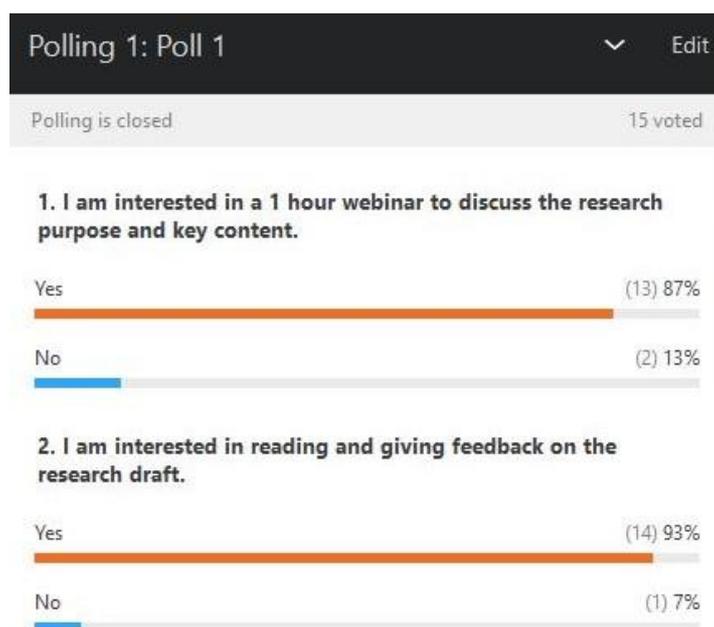
The aim has not been to prioritise CD over SD, rather to bring CD into clear focus and to identify the practices and structural necessities that it raises.

The barriers and concerns raised by participants through webinars 1-3, were grouped for discussion in webinar 4 under the following topic headings:

- Funding
- Crisis
- Training and Mentoring
- Boards & Management Committees
- Internal & External Support for the Work

In summary, the major themes of the webinars are (i) that the community members who raise the issues should be supported to form a group to address the issues. Their OWNERSHIP of issues, process and solutions is paramount. We considered the steps in building ownership. (ii) Secondly, we emphasised that the practitioner's role is to support and enable the group. The practitioner walks alongside, enabling the group to access information, resources and new relationships as relevant. (iii) Wherever possible, change is negotiated through the impacting structures and institutions of society. This is social change work.

Poll 1: People were invited to indicate whether they are interested in contributing to discussion about the framing of the report, and/or to reading and feeding back on a draft of the report. See poll results at end of this summary.

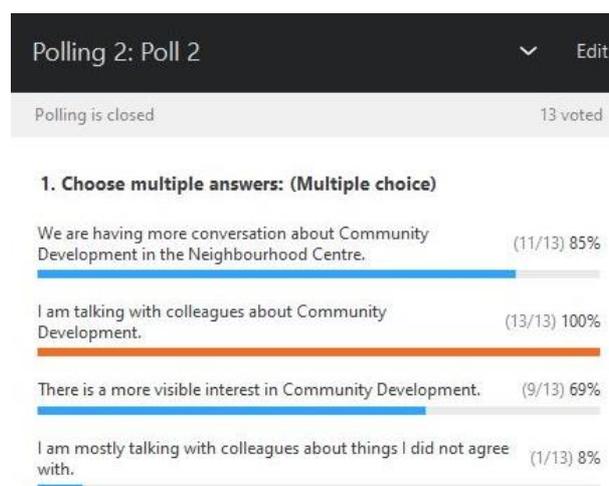


Discussion 1

Participants spoke about how the webinar series has led to new conversations in their neighbourhood centre or networks.

- Needs for mentoring and training to happen to keep CD continuing and to keep the knowledge
- Workers can get stuck in being in a deliverer of services – including events, groups and community activities. The CD workers job is to support citizen-led activity.
- Often CD can stream into being in a service delivery model, i.e. some good work with community members to identify needs, problems, aspirations, can turn into NCC initiating a service intended to address that need.
- When an organisation becomes set in service delivery, it can be hard to change the structure towards CD
- Challenge inherent in NCs – how do we hold CD and balance the support for those who come in with service-related needs
- Funding often determines and dictates what happens, rather than the core vision and values of the organisation
- COVID has given an opportunity to reflect and look at CD
- NCCs are encouraged that QFCA is taking up this conversation and lifting this approach to practice with NCs, particularly as NCs can get busy and caught up in other agendas and the busy work of doing things for others; rather than focused on citizen-led work.
- How important the community-based work within localities is. It is important to reinforce this is about running developmental processes parallel to service delivery. It is not about saying this is the only set of practices you need.
- Some people in the organisations are interested in CD and some are not; and that's ok too.
- Over the years we have been pushed in service delivery and this has reshaped the overarching structural arrangements, in ways that do not work for community development. Hence we need a shift in the structural arrangements to support CD. And to have everyone fluent in working across both.

Poll 2: Participants indicated if the webinar series led to new conversations in their neighbourhood centre or networks.



Discussion 2

Participants were invited to speak to issues they would like to work with others in progressing following the webinars. Some participants had indicated their interest prior to the webinars.

Trish Ferrier (Deception Bay NC): **How do we embed CD in our Neighbourhood Centres, including Boards?**

E. patricia1ferrier@gmail.com

Trish is inviting people who may like to work with her on this topic, each focusing their own NCs, but with shared learnings.

See the transcript of Trish's talk at the end of this document for background and insights on this topic.

Mark Wischnat (Caloundra CC): **How can NC's reclaim CD when they are caught up in crisis?** E. mark@calcomm.org.au

Mark explained that in several Centres the demand for immediate help is overwhelming. It is so easy to get stuck there and not move it to CD. Mark wants to explore this relation between crisis demand and a CD approach. His concern is how to build ownership of the issues and processes when so many people are in crisis, and staff hours are taken up with this? Mark is inviting others who share this concern into conversation with him.

Paula Callaghan (Benarrawa): **How do we invigorate peer mentoring across NC's?** E. benarrawacd2@westnet.com.au

CD is at the core of Benarrawa. It has long been part of the culture and part of their strategic plan. We want to share and celebrate CD practice. We had a CD peer learning circle with other Centres for a while. This is one of the possibilities to reignite this space and see what evolves. Paula is inviting others who may be interested in CD peer learning to contact her.

Training Needs

Em James, QFCA, asked for indications of what kind of training is the priority as she will seek funds. Maria Tennant: put her hand up to be part of a further conversation on this. PJ Humphries identified that Praxis have been running CD training funded by Brisbane City Council, Chris Mundy identified that Moreton Bay Council is funding training too. Carmel identified that there is a training body of work (a training course) established over decades in Central Qld, developed by senior practitioners. Training specific to the NC sector would be really valuable. Em and Maria are keen to work together with others on this.

Em James (QFCA): **How can we respond to the CD training needs of NC's?** E. gm@qfca.org.au

Additional points of interest raised included: to then look at the different levels of training and then how we look at sustainability of the training - links to universities; and on opportunities for deepening practice and specific challenges within this, and the challenge, but also to help folks who are new or want to refresh their CD practice so a mix of both.

QFCA will share with NC's about these topics and invite others to join in the conversation.

It was agreed that participants interested in following up would contact each of the above people according to the issue they would like to progress.

In all cases best effort would be made to follow a community development approach in progressing the issue.

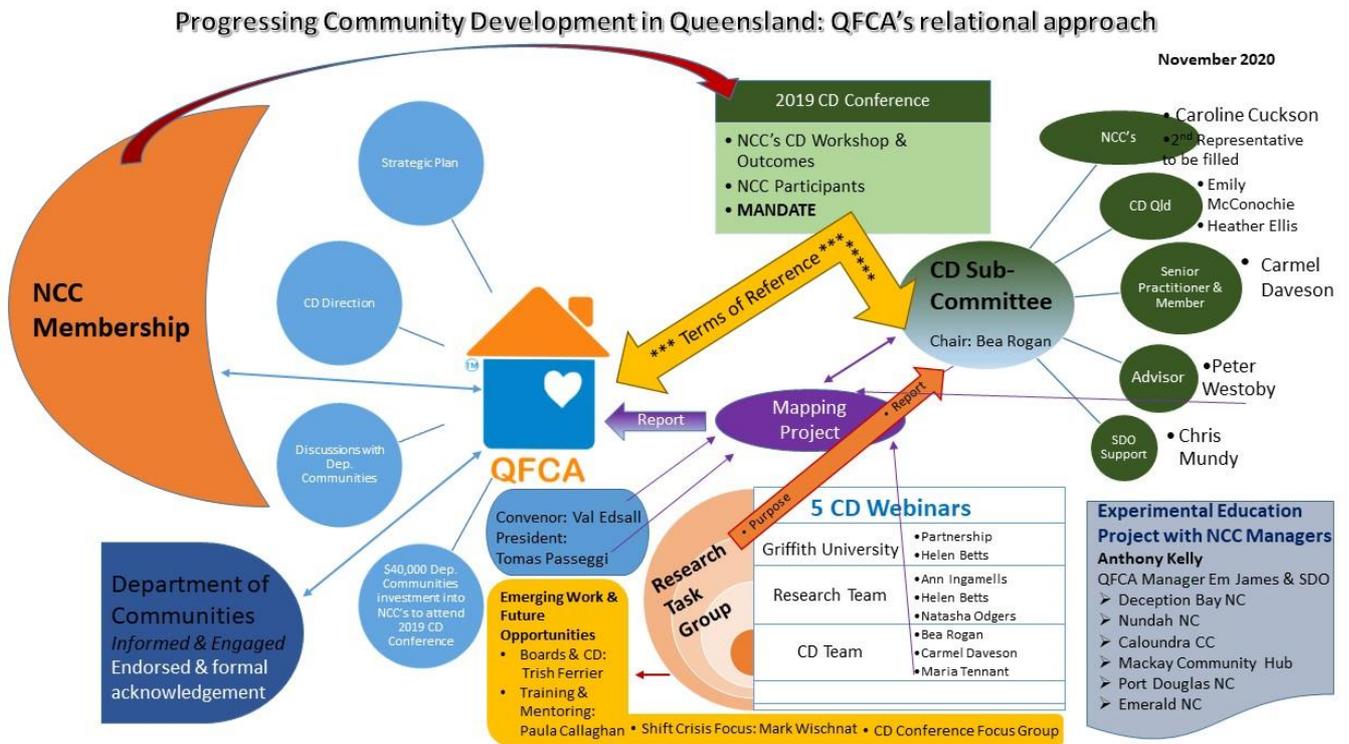
Poll 3. Asked people to indicate issues they would like to continue working on.



Overview of the Work which has accompanied the Webinars

Bea Rogan and Tomas Passeggi showed through a diagram of the various engagements and feedback processes made through QFCA and the Community Development Sub-Committee.

A video of this explanation is available at <https://youtu.be/r9Yt1kzPU4g>.



Tomas Passeggi - I have recently realised that QFCA and particularly myself, have become superfluous. Four years ago people knew they paid membership but didn't really know what QFCA did. But now there is such ownership by so many people that there is a momentum beyond anything we could expect. Through 2017 and 2018 a few people who had still believed in QFCA worked on a strategic plan. We wanted to tell the story of citizen led transformation through Neighbourhood Centres. That plan came into force in 2019. It gave us the opportunity to explain to government that we wanted to go in the direction of citizen led, place-based focus. Perhaps surprisingly, government were supportive of this. It led to the Department of Communities funding \$40,000 towards Neighbourhood Centre representatives going to the CD Conference in 2019. 42 NC representatives applied – indicating that this topic is of great interest to Centres. Many wrote letters to the Minister thanking her for this. This told us that NC's want to be involved in this strategic direction. In doing this, QFCA has moved away from an adversarial role and begun to work *relationally* with the Department – looking for areas of common interest. We know there has been some criticism of this move, but we can see that it is paying off. We now meet almost monthly with government. Anyway, back to the story, at the conference, there was a resurgence of interest in CD which resulted in a dedicated session hosted by Bea and facilitated by Peter Westoby, which considered how we might reclaim CD. People were saying YES, we want to know more.

QFCA began doing the 0-1-3 with centres who were indicating they want to be involved. Chris Munday and Jenny Ryan (QFCA Board and New Farm NC) were given the job of moving the request forward, and this led to establishment of the QFCA CD subcommittee, with a clear terms of reference. That committee is chaired by Bea and Val Edsall – who is here today, is the convenor. It has 2 NC reps, 2 CD Qld reps and Carmel Daveson as senior practitioner is the other member. Chris resources the CD Sub-committee. So, there are 2 kinds of work happening here in parallel: the structural work of getting in place a mechanism with clear accountability to QFCA and the NC sector, and the work of building momentum of the CD conversations.

At this point Griffith University offered to support QFCA by establishing a CD and research task group and putting in some resources to move this conversation process forward. Anthony Kelly offered a series of sessions which he called and Experimental Education Program for a small number of managers of NC's, so that managers have clearer recognition of the various layers of the CD approach in NC's and are able to both manage the micro (practice) and the macro (board) dimensions of the work. Six managers said they were ready are participating. Anthony requested that the Department be informed of this, which QFCA did, and the Director General replied in summary - *It is pleasing to hear that the Department funding is being used to progress training, in particular community development. These are very important processes as the state recovers from COVID 19.*

The other process, running alongside the webinars is the CD focus group, which brings together people who were at the original meeting at the 2019 conference to reflect on what has been occurring in response to the request from that meeting.

Bea explained that the CD Sub-committee membership will be reviewed at the QFCA AGM, and people may want to put their hands up for that committee. Tomas added that there may be other sub committees following up on issues. He said "We want to back people who have an interest in working together on a NC issue".

Maria – "In my experience without a structure it's almost impossible to progress issues. So I am very glad people are there to carry the issues forward. We need vessels, mechanisms to hold the important things that are happening.

Tomas thanks Natasha for all of the work in creating diagram and presentations.

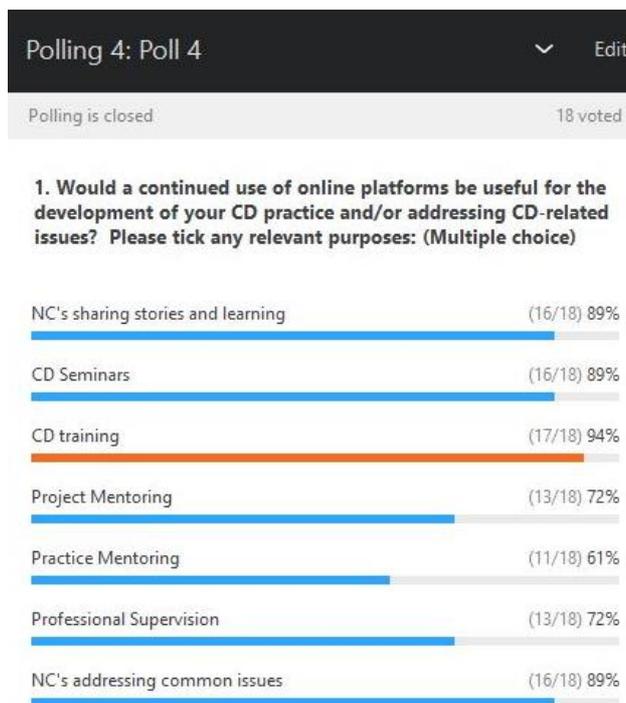
Trish congratulated QFCA on their initiative in working with senior practitioners and others – she said it's a perfect storm – in a very good way and is empowering for all of us.

Andrew commented on the helpful diagrams and asked how he would know all this if he had not been present at this session. Natasha and Chris have created spaces on QFCA website with links to all of the many treasures from the webinar and associated processes.

Carmel, in closing, said she thinks of these growing relationships between us all as a golden web and that what each of us does contributes to that web. Of the CD/Research task group, she said, we have learned so much – you are the leaders and I am now confident there are people carrying forward this important tradition of community development Queensland style. It's been an honour to be part of all this. She thanked QFCA for their leadership and for all the support QFCA staff have put into the process.

Tomas also thanked participants and task group and said – this is what it is all about – us supporting each other – networking together and creating change together. We are more powerful than any of us thought. Em, just back from a Queensland road trip, concluded that there are so many connections and commonalities which make this the moment of opportunity.

Evaluation Poll



Transcript

Trish Ferrier - President of the Neighbourhood Centre at Deception Bay

I am the President of the Neighbourhood Centre at Deception Bay, I have probably been there for about 12 years, really because I want to hold that CD vision in the organisation and I haven't found anyone to take it over. So, if anybody wants to, I'd be really happy to hand it over, in fact Mark (Wischnat) was on the committee with me 12 years ago. But in the process of the new board that we have established we did in fact have Susan Black as our President initially and she developed a community development framework for the organisation, and we have held that as a very important organisational document to inform the way that we do everything, whether it is service delivery or CD work.

Having the documents doesn't mean it actually happens. But before I go on, I want to park that aside, because I want to say that I am a bit of a fundamentalist. I actually think a Neighbourhood Centre is such an important organisation in a community. I used to manage the youth program in Deception Bay, when I got there and saw the role of the NHC, I thought I can't do this work in this community unless I am partnering with the NHC and we had a great CD worker there and the organisations worked beautifully together and so much could happen because we could use our organisational power to engage with the communities, to do what the community were asking for. Now you know people come and go, so that's one of the organisational issues is that you know people move on and you get new people in and they do not necessarily understand that.

But, back to the point that NC's have such an important leadership role and can make CD work happen if it holds that as its overall vision. And of course, service delivery can sit underneath that, so that's my position. CD has to be the overarching (method). We are looking at ways of how we might put it in the constitution and embed it structurally in the organisation. I just want to give an example, when COVID shut down came, we know we've got lots of services that have been established in the wake of the work of the NHC and the youth program, but when COVID came along they all shut their doors, they walked out and we're standing there going "What about the community, how do we empower the community to deal with this issue". So, our focus was on how do we keep the doors open even through government's telling us to shut down. We took a very different tact because of our commitment to working with the community. People volunteered and all sorts of things happened as a result of us doggedly saying we will not (shut down), we are not a service that will shut down, we are central in this community. As a president, we have great people on our board but, "CD well that's Trisha's thing". Even though they are interested in it they don't really, probably to my fault I haven't taken them through training, so when I came along and got involved in this (Webinar series), oh gosh we as sector could organise board training around CD and why it is so important. And my other thing about CD is that CD helps the community resolve, deal with its issues of poverty rather than us just being that charity model, that is a really important thing for the organisation to hold.

When you get new directors, some love CD and some don't and so then how do you work with somebody who just is not in that paradigm and obviously that is through your recruitment processes. But there is a whole lot of structural things you need to have in place – your recruitment process, your induction, your professional training there are so many things to get it happening. Then of course the CD worker is often not in a very senior position you we don't get a lot of funding, so structurally – so how does a CD worker tell other senior staff how to do their job, in relation to the way that they focus and work with their clients? So that is why it really has got to be very well held at the board level, the director level, and then across the staff in ongoing training, dialogue, part of the induction and stuff like that. We have not got all of this in place but in a way this process has inspired me to go oh there is a way through this action learning that we've been doing over 10 years, this is what we could actually aspire to do not only for our organisation but also for the sector.

So I am very keen for something to come out of this work so that we can keep having this dialogue and as an organisation I've already spoken to our board and they're really keen that we stay engaged in this process and happy to put resources and time into supporting the sector to develop this. If people want to contact me by all means do, just email, get my address from Chris (Mundy QFCA) and I am happy to hear from you.