

**Over  
7.5 million  
primary school  
children fed  
breakfast!**

# YMCA Community Impact Report

2022-2023

YMCA BRISBANE  
Y-CARE (SOUTH EAST QLD) INC.

**Creating healthy, connected  
and thriving communities**

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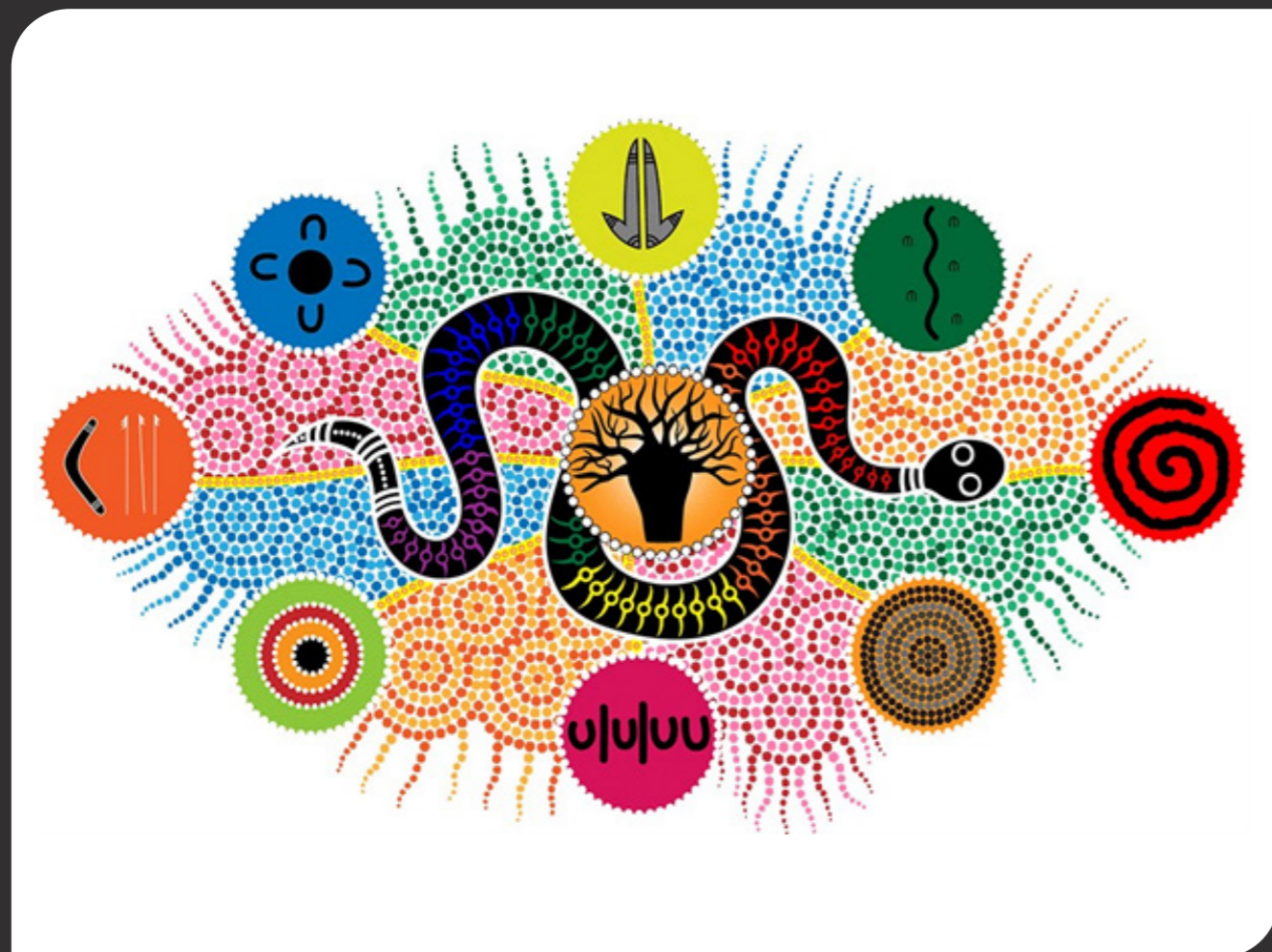
**YMCA BRISBANE**

107 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006 **p:** (07) 3253 1700  
**e:** brisbane@ymcabrisbane.org **w:** ymcaqueensland.org.au



**The Y Queensland acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and operate.**

We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and recognise their continuing connection to land, community and culture.



The Y Reflect R.A.P Artwork  
by Artist Chad Briggs



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# YMCA QUEENSLAND

## Our Guiding Principles

### Our Strategic Framework

#### Belief

We believe in the power of inspired young people

#### Mission

To empower children, young people and communities Australia-wide to build a just, sustainable, equitable and inclusive world, where every person can thrive in body, mind and spirit

#### Vision

Create healthy, connected and thriving communities

#### Strategy Statement

Our Y will achieve this vision through: developing community hubs that respond to the needs of the local community; providing real opportunities for all people to grow in body, mind and spirit; creating social enterprises that support the organisation's financial viability and mission; empowering young people; developing a safe, resilient, unbreakable organisation



### Our Four Pillars

At the 2022 AGM, all Associations committed to align their own strategy with the four pillars and report annually on their progress via the Community Impact Reporting process.

#### COMMUNITY WELLBEING

##### Human Services, Health Services, Risk, Food

The YMCA believes that every person should have the means to grow and thrive in body, mind and spirit while taking care of their individual and collective wellbeing.

#### MEANINGFUL WORK

##### Education, Commerce, Finance, Logistics, Technology, Construction

The YMCA Movement believes that all young people deserve the right to learn, engage in flexible dignified and meaningful work and build sustainable livelihoods.

#### A SUSTAINABLE PLANET

##### Agriculture, Engineering, Ecology, Tourism, Utilities

The YMCA believes that we should all commit and take action for the protection and regeneration of our planet, preparing for a just transition to a world where humans live in full harmony with nature.

#### A JUST WORLD

##### Law, Public Services, Policy, Communications

The YMCA believes in the power of young people and communities to promote and advance justice, peace, equity and human rights for all.



# the **Y** Our Impact 2022-2023



Our fitness centres have a strong family focus and welcome people of all ages and ability levels. Our aspiration is to build healthy, thriving, and connected communities.

**136**  
people provided with a safe, permanent place to call home.



**Housing**



**Camping**



**12,713**  
took advantage of our camping and outdoor education facilities



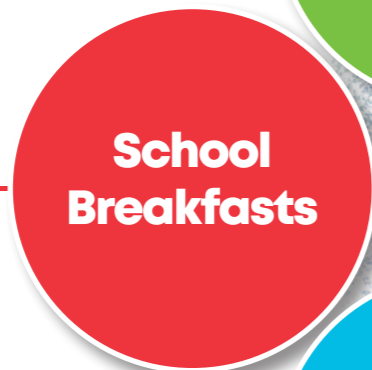
**Child Care and OSHC**

**18,260**  
children attended one of our Child Care programs



**Community Centres**

**178,148**  
people attended our community centres last year



**School Breakfasts**

**924,058**  
free breakfast meals across more than 150 schools



**Education & Training**

**895**  
students were enrolled across the ten campuses of YMCA's Vocational School



**Youth Programs**

**9,632**  
young people benefited from getting involved in our youth programs



**Volunteers**

**131**  
volunteers generously donated their valuable time and talent



**Staff**

**1,245**  
passionate and dedicated staff members delivered our programs in the community



**Health and Wellbeing**



**19,057**  
people participated in our suite of active recreation offerings

"The staff do a great job making you feel welcome, they push you to chase after your passions...they create a welcome and safe space."

- Year 12 student, 2022



"Regular and consistent access to healthy breakfast options makes children feel valued and sees them thrive, with positive impacts on classroom behaviour and academic performance"

- Breakfast Program Coordinator



# RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

## Working Towards Reconciliation

YMCA Queensland includes a diverse range of sectors and we have identified that some of these sectors have already commenced service RAPs, and have established or are actively seeking connections with local Aboriginal communities, connection with local Aboriginal Elders and broader Aboriginal organisations.

We have also identified some cultural protocols are in place, such as the use of Acknowledgement of Country by staff and children. We recognise as an organisation that this work is not occurring across all sectors.

We aim to make reconciliation a whole of organisation journey; learning from the knowledge of our more experienced sectors and welcoming the fresh perspectives of all people, beneficiaries, members and their families including local Aboriginal communities, organisations and Elders.



### COMMITMENT 1 Relationships

YMCA Queensland is committed to identifying and improving our existing relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals and looking to develop new partnerships that are respectful and sustainable.



### COMMITMENT 2 Respect

YMCA Queensland is committed to achieving greater understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.



### COMMITMENT 3 Opportunities

YMCA Queensland is committed to enhancing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to achieve social inclusion, economic participation and health equality.



**CHILDREN'S SERVICES, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

**Over 7.5 million primary school children fed breakfast!**



## YMCA Schools' Breakfast Program



Y Queensland's Schools' Breakfast Program reached an incredible milestone this year — celebrating more than 7.5 million free breakfasts served since the program began!

Starting with just five schools in the Logan area back in 2006, it is truly amazing to think about how our Schools' Breakfast Program has grown. Today, the program supports more than 157 schools and stretches across South East Queensland, helping more than 13,500 children each week.

One thing that has remained constant during the program's 17-year history, however, is its dedication and mission to reducing the number of school students disadvantaged by hunger and poor nutrition. Research shows regular and consistent access to healthy breakfast options makes children feel valued and sees them thrive, with positive impacts on classroom behaviour and academic performance.

Research also shows that engaged education creates better positive outcomes for the children, linking this to further education and long-term employment prospects

# YMCA SCHOOLS' BREAKFAST PROGRAM

## School Case Study

CHILDREN'S SERVICES, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Located in Ipswich, this School is a government primary school for boys and girls. Based in a small rural community in the Lockyer Valley Region, the school has an enrolment of just over 200 students of which 2% have a culturally diverse background and 15% are First Nations Australians (ACARA, 2021).

This school's Index of Community Socio-Education Advantage (ICSEA) value is below the national average of 1000 (ACARA, 2013). This school's ICSEA score indicates that its students are more educationally disadvantaged than 93% of schools in Australia (ACARA, 2021; ACARA, 2013).

The region has a rapid growth rate in the area without the infrastructure and housing support for families. They have lost students due to families having to move because of the rising rent costs, as "There is not enough housing for the influx". Funding from the Department of Communities, and the help of three parent volunteers has seen the school expand the program from one to two days a week.

The additional funding has also helped the school increase the variety of food they provide including a cooked breakfast on Fridays which all the children enjoy.

They are also able to procure snacks and food packs that are available for students during 'Brain Breaks' or for emergency lunches for students without lunch.



### Positive Changes since Receiving Additional Support

Staff members have observed that children were more engaged going into class with food in their tummy which has led to a reduction of behavioural issues in the morning.

The school representatives also felt that the greatest benefit of the breakfast program is its contribution to building community spirit and increasing a sense of belonging among its students.

There are three parents who have become involved in the program, they rotate their volunteer time, and one of these three parents is a chef. Through the program, the opportunities for engagement between students, parents, and teachers have grown.

1 ICSEA scores are calculated based on socioeconomic factors contributing to students' educational advantages or disadvantages, such as housing and financial strain (ACARA, 2013).



# COMMUNITY CENTRES

## The Y Cannon Hill

CHILDREN'S SERVICES, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

### Provided \$916,489 in community value in 2022

This community value equates to \$7.40 for every \$1 of Queensland Government Neighbourhood Centre funding or \$305.50 for every 1 hour the Neighbourhood Centre was in use. This includes the value of:



**\$559,967**

Improved quality of life through social connection



**\$76,980**

Emergency relief provided



**\$170,433**

Volunteer contributions



**\$109,109**

Services provided



### Wellbeing Wednesday

The Y Cannon Hill Community Centre's Wellbeing Wednesdays launched in July 2022 in response to the rising cost of living and the housing crisis.

"After consulting with the community, we identified there was a lack of support services available for those living in Cannon Hill and the surrounding suburbs. With limited funding, we reached out to local businesses and community organisations and we have been able to support up to 60 families per week, providing food to between 200-250 people a week!" Wendy Blackmon, Centre Coordinator.

The initiative has created a safety net for families and community members who are 'doing it tough' by providing essential items and fostering a sense of connectedness.

### Key achievements have been:

- Providing 1696 food parcels, the majority from donated food supplies.
- Orange Sky has washed and dried 134 loads of laundry during Wellbeing Wednesday.
- Supporting many communities who attend Wellbeing Wednesday by linking them to other services and supports.

**Patricia** is a new migrant from Ecuador and says she has developed a strong sense of community from coming to Wellbeing Wednesday. Patricia met Jess at Wellbeing Wednesday and they have formed a strong friendship.

**Jess** described Wellbeing Wednesdays as "it's like you're coming to a community park and having lunch. You never feel like you're vulnerable here, you feel like you're getting a present".

**Janet** has been coming to Cannon Hill since the initiative started. She shared how she is blown away by the love the staff and volunteers show towards her. As a cancer patient, she appreciates how they know her special dietary needs and how they thoughtfully pack her food hamper.



Pictured: Janet and Patricia, community members.

# COMMUNITY CENTRES

## The Y Springfield Lakes

**Provided \$734,116 in community value in 2022**

This community value is not funded by the Queensland Government Neighbourhood Centre funding and equates to \$131.09 for every 1 hour the Neighbourhood Centre was in use. This includes the value of:



**\$321,445**

Improved quality of life through social connection



**\$87,799**

Volunteer contributions



**\$324,872**

Services provided



### YMCA Springfield Lakes Christmas Hamper Drive

In late 2022 we partnered with Springfield Lakes State School to lead a community drive to collect food and toys for financially disadvantaged families in the area. In total we were delighted to distribute over 150 food and toy hampers to over 45 families.



### YMCA Trick or Treat Zombie Walk

Over 300 families joined us for a night of spooky fun including our Zombie graveyard zone, haunted house, Spooktacular craft station, trick or treating, roaming Zombies and live music.

In collaboration with local organisations we set up a safe space for children and families to safely trick or treat in the Greater Springfield region and much fun was had by all, including our staff!



## Kelly's Story

**Kelly\* is completing Year 12 at the Logan Senior Y Vocational School, which she has attended since Year 10.**

Kelly has overcome significant personal and mental health challenges. Despite these, she is on track to complete her studies at the end of 2023 with 27 QCE points and an anticipated ATAR of 80.

While Kelly is currently completing a Certificate IV in Justice, she has already completed a Certificate II in Retail, a Certificate II in Hairdressing, and a Lash Extension course.

Alongside her studies, Kelly runs her own lash business from home and works casually one day per week.

Kelly speaks with confidence and believes mainstream school wouldn't have provided her with the opportunities to excel. After finishing her qualification in Justice and graduating school, she has plans to study Law at University.

\* Name changed for privacy  
[Read more about student outcomes on page 14.](#)

# VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

## Student Outcomes



Y Vocational Schools deliver alternative education through a holistic model that focuses on student wellbeing, academic outcomes, and job readiness skills. The Schools are our largest impact measurement across the organisation.

In 2022, there were 895 students enrolled across the 8 Vocational School campuses over the course of the year. The Schools' average attendance rate for the year was 60.1%.

### Student Wellbeing

Y Vocational Schools use a trauma-informed model to promote student wellbeing. The model emerged from the understanding that wellbeing and school connectedness often act as protective factors against negative outcomes at school.

The 'Thrive' program is a Y-developed approach to safeguarding and improving the mental wellbeing of young people at our Vocational Schools. The program is based on neuropsychology and trauma-informed practice, and draws on mindfulness techniques to empower students to healthily regulate their emotions.

The framework presents common language and programs, strategies, and activities that build and sustain positive development in young people including a wellbeing curriculum, pastoral care, enrichment activities, therapeutic group programs, school events, and community building.

Student surveys are administered three times a year to measure program outcomes.



In 2022 in a repeated measures analysis of variance test, we found that scores on **Optimism significantly increased by 4%** from February to November.



At the beginning of the year, 27% of our students had low scores for wellbeing. By the end of the year, this proportion had dropped to 16% of the sample, indicating that our Schools **improve student wellbeing**.

In Literacy and Numeracy assessment tool pilot with a small group of students (N=14), results indicated modest but promising improvements.



In their Literacy assessment, all students demonstrated significant improvement throughout the year, **ranging from 50% to 100% improvement**.



In their Numeracy assessment, **72% of students had improved their scores**.

**“The staff do a great job making you feel welcome. They push you to chase after your passions...they create a welcoming and safe space.”**

- Year 12 student, 2022

# VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

## Outdoor Education Program



In June 2023, Outdoor Ed students scored a higher average on 4 of the 9 Thrive wellbeing measures compared to the whole school average. They had higher scores on **perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness**.

Outdoor Ed students also had a 13.6% higher attendance rate during Semester 1 compared to the whole school student attendance. The YMCA Outdoor Education Program aims for the following key outcomes for students:

- 1. Environmental Awareness and Stewardship:** Students develop an understanding of nature and the importance of conservation.
- 2. Personal and Social Development:** Students build self-confidence, problem-solving skills, teamwork, leadership, and communication abilities.
- 3. Physical Health and Wellbeing:** Outdoor activities promote fitness, coordination, and overall wellbeing.
- 4. Appreciation for Diversity and Inclusion:** Students learn respect, empathy, and appreciation for people from different backgrounds and abilities.
- 5. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:** Students develop analytical thinking and creative problem-solving skills in real-life contexts.
- 6. Connection to School Community and Place:** Students develop a sense of connection to their community and local surroundings.
- 7. Academic Integration:** Outdoor activities reinforce academic learning across various subjects.
- 8. Risk Management and Safety Skills:** Students learn to assess risks, make informed decisions, and follow safety guidelines.
- 9. Positive Attitudes and Behaviours:** Students develop a sense of wonder, curiosity, and appreciation for the outdoors, leading to lifelong engagement and environmental advocacy.
- 10. Resilience and Perseverance**
- 11. Self-Efficacy/Confidence**



**“It’s helped me with my temper, I am not a very patient person. But through camps, I have learned that if you’re not patient, you won’t get very far”**



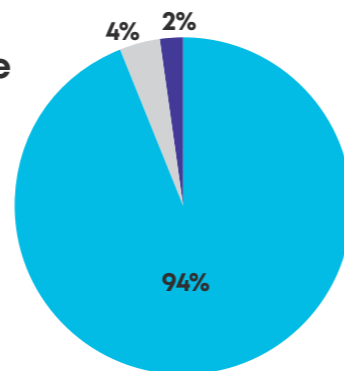
# VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

## Education and Training



### VET Certificate Courses 2022

- Cert I
- Cert II
- Cert III



Vocational, Education and Training (VET) focuses on preparing our students for employment. The VET program focuses on “Six-In-focus” activities, namely: Career Education; Career Guidance; Qualifications and Schools-Based Apprenticeships; Work Experiences; Industry Tasters; and, Enterprise Projects.

Across all YMCA Vocational School campuses, 572 students participated in various VET programs and activities in 2022. This accounted for 84% of the Y’s student population in November 2022. We administer two surveys among students, one at the beginning of the year and another at the end of the year using validated scales and some YMCA-formulated statistical questions.

With 169 (39%) engaged in completing Certificates I, II, and III hosted by various industry partners and educational institutions, the majority (94%) of students engaged in obtaining Certificate II qualifications.

“The highlight of school was probably the programs that were offered, like the certs and apprenticeships.”  
- Year 12 student, 2022

The employment rate significantly increased by 8% from the beginning to the end of the year. 33% of the surveyed students were employed at the end of 2022.

**At the end of 2022, 88% of Year 12s from Logan, 85% from Moreton Bay, 88% from Victoria Point, 85% from Brisbane South, and 80% from Ipswich Senior were planning to transition into employment, apprenticeship/ traineeship, or further training**

“The VET course prepares you for jobs in the real world, resumes, cover letters, they go into detail about what it’s like to be in the real world of work.”  
- Year 12 student, 2022.

# VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

## Cody’s Inspiring Story



**Cody is a Year 12 student at the Redlands Senior Vocational School who recently applied for, and was successful in, securing a job with the Y Fitness team at Victoria Point.**

Cody is a young person who has overcome many challenges throughout his personal and educational journey. When Tracy at the Fitness Centre was looking for reliable new team members, the Y Vocational School team were excited to take Cody over to introduce him. From the moment Tracy met Cody, she was impressed as he came to his interview with a portfolio of certificates and qualifications he had earned.

The portfolio showed how much he had done to invest in himself and his future and the wide and varied life experience he bought that Tracy had not found with other applicants from mainstream schools:

Cody will also have the opportunity to complete a Certificate II in Fitness with Y Aquatics in the near future.

“Cody brings a valuable element to the team because his life skills are vastly different. Cody has a mature appreciation for having a job, coming from the disadvantaged background he has, and he is doing extraordinarily well and has exceeded all of our expectations.”

“He gets involved in everything. He does upgrades, maintenance and renovations, as required. He covers Reception and happily talks to the parents and kids around the Fitness Centre. I have seen him grow so much and am looking forward to seeing him grow more.”

Cody’s goal is to get some more qualifications and become a Personal Trainer, “so I can give back to the YMCA because they have given so much to me.”



**“... I can give back to the YMCA because they have given so much to me.”**



**YMCA  
FITNESS &  
RECREATION**

**YMCA  
FITNESS &  
RECREATION**

# FITNESS AND RECREATION

## Cancer Survivor Program

The YMCA Cancer Survivor program continues to provide life-changing outcomes for the participants.

While the free 12-week exercise program is tailored to each individual to help them reclaim physical strength and health, it is about so much more than fitness. It's also about providing connection, support, and friendship.

Rob underwent intense treatment after being diagnosed with brain cancer and, while at the hospital one day, he saw a poster about the Y's Cancer Survivor Program.

"It's not just about coming here to do exercise... it's also about coming here to be part of something which is making a difference to all of us."

"It was transformational for me," Rob explained about joining the Program. "All of a sudden I was with people just like me."



**Our Y Queensland members who are over 65 years old, are more active than most!**



Y Queensland has a long history of providing fitness to the Brisbane community. The first record of a fitness facility or offering in Y Queensland was in 1902.

Since then, Y Queensland has continued to promote fitness to our communities. Our fitness centres have a strong family focus and welcome people of all ages and ability levels.

We use exercise guidelines for Australians, to track members' physical activity levels, which provides a proxy for their health scores. This is important because regular physical activity has many other benefits that include preventing and treating chronic conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and breast and colon cancer.

In Queensland's Health Preliminary Report, released in March 2023, 56.6% of Queenslanders reported that they had achieved the desired activity levels of 150 minutes or more per week.

In our latest member survey conducted in May 2023, Y Queensland members aged 65 and over were more active than the general population, with 57.5% of them reporting that they had achieved the desired activity levels of 150 minutes or more per week!

**"Attended my first gym, the YMCA, when I was 19, and at 79, I'm still with the Y."**

# FITNESS AND RECREATION

## Fitness Members



Y Fitness members are not only active, but they are happy promoters of the service too. Members gave the service a Net Promoter Score of 45.

The Net Promoter® Score (NPS®) is a metric used globally to measure customer engagement and advocacy levels. An NPS score higher than 30, indicates that a company is doing great and has far more happy customers than unhappy ones.

Y Fitness members gave the centre a score of 45 Net Profit Score (NPS). This score is 4 points higher than the Industry average for fitness centres in Australia.

In future surveys, we will also measure sense of connectedness among members. In this year's survey this was anecdotally mentioned by members as one of the many reasons the Y is their Centre of choice. Collecting data on this measure will provide evidence towards our goal of building healthy, thriving and connected communities.

### What our members say

"...The YMCA is the best gym I have ever been to - it is always immaculate, the equipment selection is impressive, safe 24/7 access and the general atmosphere - just outstanding. My only concern has been not knowing about this gym years ago!"

**"All of the staff are very friendly and know my name, so I feel part of the gym community. Plus, it has everything that I need there."**

"I strongly agree with the organisation and I feel that being a part of the community is important to looking out for others"

**"Good vibe, affordable, clean, and multi-aged facility for all to attend. People are just nice and make it fun to attend no matter what your fitness level is!"**



**RETAIL & HOSPITALITY**

**"... I am very thankful to have the stability and security of my home."**

## Gordon's Story

Gordon's health both physically and mentally was very run down after 19 years of being homeless and on the road.

"When I was given the unit at YMCA, it took a lot of pressure off, finally having a stable roof over my head. The property is very affordable too, which is one thing I was very worried about.

There are a lot of people around in a hard place at the moment for whatever reason and I am very thankful to have the stability and security of my home."

Gordon has been a tenant at Nowell B Taylor House since August 2016. He has a small yard which he loves tending to and Gordon comes up to the office once a week to look after all the Y's office plants, which he has been doing for a few years now.



**The Y now has 6,472 connected and happy Y Fitness members**

# RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY

## Community Housing Outcomes



### What our tenants achieved

The Y Community Housing program provides long-term affordable housing for people in the greatest of need; those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We work with tenants to address issues that have contributed to their homelessness. This program supports and manages tenancies in a way that assists tenants in sustaining their housing.

- **Safety:** 100% of tenants surveyed reported feeling safe in their units, and feeling safe in their complex.
- **Health:** 94% of tenants reported being able to access the medical services and support they need all the time.
- **Community Connectedness:** Tenants listed the various activities they're involved with including bowling, swimming, bingo, knitting, karaoke, YMCA BBQs, Yoga, live music, women's and rehab groups, and the neighborhood Centre groups.
- **Mental wellbeing:** Tenants scored an average rating of 7.5/10 for mental wellbeing. This score translates to moderately good levels of mental wellbeing.
- **Finances:** 75% of tenants reported that money in their current income was sufficient to meet their spending needs, and 44% indicated that money was not their main cause of stress.



### Stories of significant change

#### Affordability

Female tenant living at Nowell B Taylor House since opening in 2012.

"I was renting, privately and my only income is the pension, so the price of rent kept going up but the pension was not and I was getting very worried, I didn't know what was going to happen.

I was waiting for 9 years and then one day I received a letter in the mail about YMCA in Nerang and they asked if I wanted to come check it out. I've been here since the beginning.

"The most significant change for me has been that the rent is calculated based on my individual income. Because I am on the pension which isn't going up, which means my rent won't be going up. Having that peace of mind and security has changed things for me."

#### Sense of Community

Female tenant has lived at YMCA Housing for almost 9 years.

"It's the sense of community in the building. Everyone looks after everyone. It's the support network. Its home. This change is significant to me because it doesn't put a label on us. We get along together, we don't judge, there's no judgement between us all. Everybody is there for everybody. You have to be there for everyone otherwise it doesn't work. And everybody understands when someone needs space or time but also knows to ask 'are you okay' – those 3 little words are so significant."

# University Partnerships For Impact Measurement

Research partnerships from the past year include working with a team of researchers from the University of Queensland to collect and analyse Cancer Survivors data.

The Vocational School has also been working with Honours Students at the Redlands campus to investigate adolescent diets and use the findings to transfer knowledge and skills in healthier choices.

Two Psychology Honours students from Queensland University of Technology spent their 60-hour Industry placement at the Y, and helped conduct longitudinal analyses of Vocational School data. The Y is grateful for these partnerships which support us to continuously improve how we improve outcomes in the communities we serve.

### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: Understanding student school experiences through youth co-design

Y Queensland is excited to partner with the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in 2024 to conduct a co-design study for the Vocational School.

The partnership will find new ways to explore, understand, and embed the voices and experiences of young people across the entire Y School experience and, over a longer-term partnership, to better understand how the Y School way influences their post-school lives.

### This work is important for us as an organisation for several reasons:

- The findings will inform our continuous improvement strategies and improve our service offering to the students we serve. Findings will be used to strengthen future offerings and to inform advocacy initiatives.
- The project provides an opportunity for capacity building for the Y team on participatory co-design methodology for future program reviews, developments, and research projects.
- Most importantly, the process and outcomes of the study will provide the Vocational School with increased credibility as an educational institution.



# Queensland Youth Parliament (QYP)

The YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament (QYP) is an initiative of the State Council of the YMCAs of Queensland, with funding and support provided by the Queensland Government and the Queensland Parliamentary Service. First established in 1996, the program has since grown year after year to become one of the largest and most prestigious youth programs in Queensland.

QYP is a comprehensive civic education and leadership program for young people aged 15 – 25 years. It is based on three key principles: parliamentary education, personal development, and community engagement. The mission of QYP is to educate and empower young people from across Queensland to bring about positive social change.

Applications are sought from young people from across the state to represent each of Queensland's 93 electorates. Each successful Youth Member is then placed in a legislative Portfolio that seeks to replicate the work of a Government Department. Over the period of the program, each Portfolio produces a Youth Bill on an issue of significance to young people. The subsequent Youth Bill is then debated in the Legislative Assembly Chamber of Parliament House.

To gain feedback and insight on the Youth Bills, consultations are held with Ministers, Shadow Ministers, Members of Parliament, NGOs and other key stakeholders. Youth Members also participate in many community forums throughout the year, as well as meeting with and being mentored by their local Member of Parliament.



## Meet the future Prime Minister of Australia, Elahi Elahi from Logan

### Q: Why did you get involved in QYP?

"I wanted to truly create change. QYP provides opportunities and guidance to its youth members on how changes can be implemented for the betterment of the youth on a state level.

QYP also invests in the individual development of its members as a leader. You get to work alongside individuals who share the same vision and passion for giving back to our community."

### Q: What differences can you make?

"Through the Youth Parliament, I have created a bill to implement free breakfast programs in Queensland public schools and have been a part of other youth bill discussions within the chamber including implementing a mandatory indigenous education subject.

Outside of Youth Parliament I am active on other youth councils focusing on youth homelessness and the creation of anti-vaping educational workshops at schools within Logan."

### Q: What are the biggest challenges facing young people in your electorate?

"In an electorate with a poor socioeconomic position such as Woodridge, young people frequently face a multitude of obstacles that significantly affect their life. The most pressing challenge is the glaring deficit in quality education and opportunities. Young people often confront underfunded schools, overcrowded classrooms, and limited access to inexpensive extracurricular activities.

Such circumstances hinder their ability to acquire essential skills and knowledge needed for personal growth and career advancement. Moreover, the lack of accessible opportunities further compounds their struggles, making it difficult to break free from the cycle of poverty and realise their full potential.

Addressing this education and opportunity gap is crucial for empowering the youth of Woodridge to overcome the odds stacked against them and to carve out a path toward a more promising future."



### Q: The best thing about participating in QYP?

"YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament has exposed me to several opportunities, from meeting ministers and discussing critical issues affecting our contemporary youth, to debating and actively being a part of bill-writing processes on a state level. I am a young, culturally linguistic woman who resides in a low socio-economic region of Queensland and this program has provided me with opportunity to be a voice for the Youth of Queensland.

It has also supported me to improve my own interpersonal skills through the mentorship of the amazing executive team. Excellence is not a destination but a journey- The YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament is the best part of my leadership journey which I hope continues to be a significant aspect of it. This program has opened doors for me, that otherwise were closed for linguistically diverse women in politics.

I have a really strong sense that I don't want to be someone who watches the news and says 'someone should change that' – I want to say 'I can change that'."

**In the future, Elahi aspires to be the Youth Governess of Queensland or organise the Youth Parliament, before going on to become a diplomat or MP and then right to the top – aiming for Prime Minister.**

## The outcomes of the YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament

During the program, members complete a pre and post program survey. Scores across all measures significantly increased for our 2022 cohort as tabled below:

Measure	Difference*
Civic engagement	+6.7%
Social Self-esteem	+5.7%
Civic Efficacy	+10%
Exposure to diversity	+13%
Youth voice	+22%
Knowledge of Member of Parliament role	+13%
Public Speaking Anxiety**	-20%

# YMCA QUEENSLAND

## Op Shops



Our YMCA Op Shops are a special part of the communities we live and work in. The first YMCA Op Shop in Brisbane opened almost 7 years ago in Upper Mt Gravatt. Then Mango Hill in 2020 and in 2023 we have just opened our 3rd store in Strathpine.

### We are "All about Community".

We are very thankful to the generosity of our local communities with their donations. Our stores are 95% manned by tireless work from our amazing volunteers who range in age from 13 years – 82 years. There is no age barrier and we all work united, and have become friends. Without the community donations and volunteers we wouldn't have Op Shops.

Our volunteers who live in their local community work tirelessly sorting large amounts of very generous donations; providing affordable items during the current cost-of-living crisis.

We also quietly support and clothe people & families in their time of need within the community with a listening ear and a caring heart. Great care and thought go into visual merchandising with numerous customers commenting on how well presented and inviting our stores are.

We pride ourselves on how we work to support the environment by recycling waste and reducing our footprint. We look at other avenues to offload and recycle unsellable donations.

The funds we raise help support our social impact programs like the YMCA Schools' Breakfast Program and the Cancer Survivor Program. The YMCA Op Shops also play an important role by facilitating work experience for vocational students to gain valuable hands-on retail experience and complete their competencies for their certificates. The students have conveyed to us how much fun it is to work at the Op Shops and that the skills they've learnt have given them confidence to seek part-time work. We are very pleased to be a part of the students' positive healthy growth and happiness in volunteering.

Anna first came to the Y Op Shop Mango Hill just after we opened as a student from our YMCA Vocational School, North Lakes in 2020. She was studying Retail Cert II and did the theory at the school and 3 months' work experience at our Op Shop.

After leaving school, in January 2021 Anna requested to come back as a volunteer to gain more self-confidence and experience in a workplace that has 24 lovely volunteers in a welcoming environment. Anna has recently secured a job at Costco and our team are so proud of her!

**“Our volunteers work tirelessly sorting large amounts of very generous donations, providing affordable items during the current cost-of-living crisis.”**



YMCA Op Shop Volunteers (L-R) Eleni, Carol, Anna & Susan

Patrick started volunteering at the Mt Gravatt Op Shop in September 2022. More than a year later, Patrick has blossomed and is a great help every Wednesdays and Fridays. We can see the increasing self-confidence and pleasure Patrick takes in completing tasks, and when some days become trying,

Patrick is now able to engage with staff and/or other volunteers to help him work through problems. It's really such a pleasure to see a young man trying his best to overcome his difficulties while volunteering and giving back to the community. We are so very proud of our Patrick!



Op Shop Volunteer, Patrick



# Stories and updates from around



## International Food Day: Parkinson Vocational School

The Y Vocational School staff members and teachers cooked up a feast from their homelands; everything from West African curry to Torres Strait Sop Sop to Philippine Rice Cakes.

The reality of everyday life for our young people is one full of trauma, challenges and hardship. For many of them, something as simple as a lunch cooked for them, at a school where every member of staff has gone above and beyond, is a moment of validation of their importance and value.



It is a wildly wonderful group of brilliant people at Parkinson Vocational School (as at every campus), and occasions like this fill the cup with passion to continue to make differences to our students' lives.

## Affordable Housing: Slacks Creek Opening

This year, Y Queensland officially opened its newest affordable housing complex, Edwards Place, offering hope for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

Edwards Place, the third affordable housing development established and managed by the Y, offers a safe haven with 18 one and two-bedroom self-contained units.

The Y looks forward to sharing the impact of Edward's Place's efforts to create a safe, connected, and empowered community.



## Young Parents and Bubs Group - Mango Hill

### 'A soft place to fall'

Mango Hill's Young Parents and Bubs group provides a safe space for young parents who were students at the Y's Vocational School to connect, discuss parenting challenges, and offer each other mutual support.

The group also helps our young people avoid isolation and gives them an opportunity to build new friendships for themselves and their children.

This is a one-of-a-kind group exclusively for past students and their partners and is run by two Community Centre Coordinators Angela Tebbit and Kelly McGrath. Angela and Kelly were both Youth Workers at the Y Vocational School and both knew many of the young parents well from the time they were students.

A key partner is the Y Fitness team which runs a gymnastics program at the community center. This team provides a fun-filled free play on the gymnastics floor for the young parents' toddlers while their parents connect over free coffee and nibbles.

The young parents are also able to buy homewares and clothing from the YMCA Op Shop at very discounted prices.

Young parents experience barriers to accessing support or resources due to cost or lack of knowledge of what's available. This group empowers them with information, referrals, and support. It helps them overcome the lack of confidence in help-seeking.



**"Our young people have overcome a lot of challenges and added to that, they also have to navigate the challenges of parenting, which for many of them is a first-time experience"**

- Angela Tebbit



Pictured: Angela and Kelly, Young Parents and Bubs Group

# Punk Show at The LINK

A chance meeting at a Youth Week that the Y was supporting has led to the establishment of a safe and inclusive space for young people to listen to, and create punk music in Redlands.

Local artists, Brax and Alfie have launched a youth record label called Dead Trigger Records (DTR) and hosted a pop-up recording studio at The Y Vocational School, transforming a classroom into a studio space and recording 5 bands over the holidays.

The team also hosted 3 shows (all 4 band line ups) with 80 – 100 young people attending. YMCA hospitality students ran a café serving dinner and coffee during the events to gain experience.

The Y has supported DTR in writing a grant submission to further their project and have connected them with a range of industry and community organisations to help build their capacity with the goal of hosting a Youth Week PUNK Festival in 2024, and grow the number of Punk shows at The LINK.



**Local artists, Brax and Alfie have launched a youth record label called Dead Trigger Records (DTR) and hosted a pop-up recording studio at The Y Vocational School...**

## Warwick Indoor Recreation and Aquatic Centre (WIRAC)

Disability Participation Day welcomed over 60 children and adults with disabilities attending the day.

The day comprised of a court activities session followed by an Aquatic session. A few Schools attended, including East, Warwick High School and West School.



## Facility Developments around



## Bundaberg Vocational School

YMCA Queensland has officially opened a new \$6+ million vocational school campus in Bundaberg, offering a life-changing, innovative education pathway for students seeking an alternative to mainstream schooling.

The School promotes a flexible, supportive learning environment for young people, especially tailored to those who struggle in conventional classrooms.

The new Bundaberg campus is already empowering more than 27 students in years 10 – 12 on their journey to employment, with enrolment numbers growing rapidly. Structured rows of desks and a strict curriculum are swapped with more flexible and youthful learning spaces that encourage participation and engagement in class.



With a mix of typical high school subjects, certificate courses and other supportive programs, students are able to thrive and find a career pathway they are passionate about pursuing.

“Our mission is to positively engage young people in education and lifelong learning in an inclusive environment, empowering them to become well rounded, confident and healthy human beings who are able to gain employment or enter into further education,” said YMCA Vocational School Principal, Rella Taylor-Byrne.



## Parkinson Vocational School

In 2019, we purchased an established community facility at 61 Sandstone Place in Parkinson, with the intention of establishing a senior vocational school campus onsite. In January 2023, we did just that, opening the Brisbane South - Parkinson Senior Campus.

The facility spans three floors of the building and includes general learning areas, VET training spaces, a fully-equipped recording studio and flexible multi-purpose spaces.

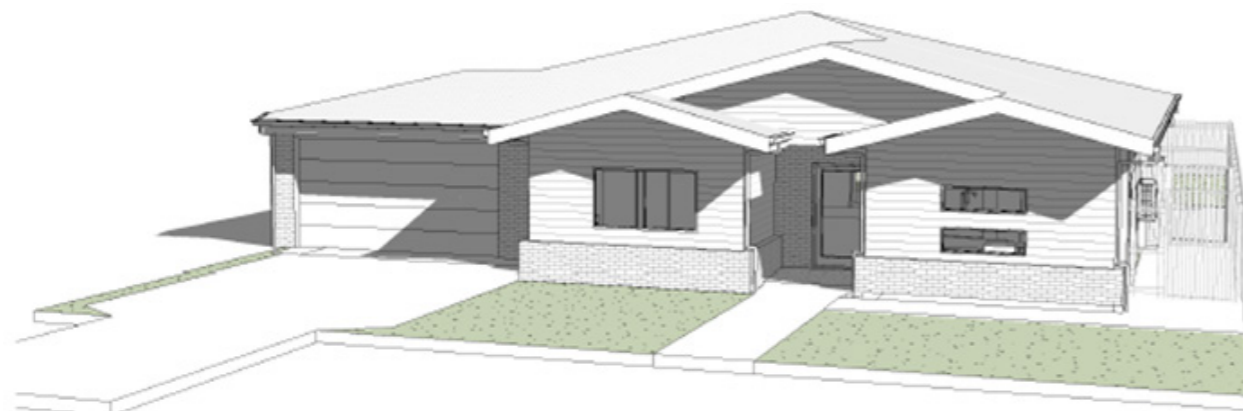
In addition, the Y leases out parts of the building to a café operator and for an indoor rock climbing centre, which provides further opportunities for students to gain vocational skills and recreational experiences. The site is also the home to our Y Op Shop sorting and distribution warehouse. It is a true Y hub.



## Supported Disability Accommodation (SDA) in Silkstone

We are currently constructing a pilot SDA share house in Silkstone in Ipswich. The house will provide a permanent, supported home for up to three people with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs, along with provision for 24/7 care if required.

The house will have accessible features to help residents live more independently rather than being placed in institutionalised care settings. Construction is forecast for completion by the end of 2023 and we are excited to welcome new residents in 2024.



# Safeguarding Children and Young People



At the Y, safeguarding children and young people is our highest priority.

**'Feel Safe and Be Safe'**

**We strive to ensure children and young people feel safe and are safe in all our services.**

The Y Queensland supports safeguarding by focused leadership and governance from the Board and the CEO. Our Safeguarding Framework integrates safeguarding into three pillars 'Culture, Environment and Operations' that is embedded in all our services/programs within our Y practices, policies and procedures.

A safe culture empowers children and young people to speak up to Y staff through disclosures that allow their voices to be heard in a safe environment. Y People are expected to follow a Safeguarding Code of Conduct which incorporates the National Safe Behaviours. We are committed to truly listening to children and young people by ensuring all our staff are trained in safeguarding.

All staff complete safeguarding induction training and regular refresher training. This supports staff to identify safeguarding concerns to help protect children and young people from harm/abuse or neglect.

All safeguarding concerns are escalated to the safeguarding team of experts that help guide and support staff that in turn support the children and young people.

The staff support the children and young people to develop strategies that help children feel calm and connected, to allow them to engage in Y activities and programs to their full potential.

Staff follow the philosophy that is fostered from the National Safeguarding movement that all Y people follow the 'Stay Safe, Tell Someone Program'. This empowers all people including children, young people, staff and all other people that attend any of our Y services, 'if you see something, hear something or feel something speak up and tell someone'.

The Safeguarding team sit within the Risk & Compliance area of the organisation. Safeguarding look at all risks in each service/program with a safeguarding lens that allow us to plan in advance to prevent incidents occurring. We audit every site yearly to ensure best practices are being adhered to at all times. We focus on continuous improvement to best support the children and young people at the Y.

The Y Queensland participated in an independent review at the start of this year by the Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF). All levels of the organisation were examined in keeping with best practice of having safeguarding embedded organisation-wide.

**We were awarded a rating of 'Excellence' which is the highest possible rating. ACF Review for Safeguarding clearly communicates to children, young people and their families that the organisation values the safety and wellbeing of children and young people are at the forefront.**

This achievement reflects all the hard work that the Y people display in keeping children and young people safe, happy and heard on a daily basis.



Alana Gore (Safeguarding Advisor), Damian Foley (CEO), Michael Gillam (Executive Lead - Risk and Compliance), and Charlene Reynolds (Safeguarding Manager)

# MESSAGE FROM THE President of the Board

HEATHER ALLAN



Our collective belief in the power of inspired young people drives us to continually seek ways to implement and measure how we are creating positive impacts in the communities we serve. With this in mind, I am grateful for the success our people have achieved in the past 12 months in terms of growth and impact.

When I reflect on the front cover of this report and the celebration of more seven and a half million breakfasts served to primary school children, I am both humbled at the growth achieved, and inspired to drive that impact further.

Growth does not happen on its own and, on behalf of the Board, I recognise Damian Foley who has demonstrated great leadership in his first year with Y Queensland. Damian and the Leadership Team have steered us through a period of transition and delivered very positive results across the organisation.

Early last financial year, the Board and Damian undertook a review of our strategic direction, looking at building on the successes of previous years. Together, we identified a number of priorities designed to position Y Queensland to build on our community impact in the areas of vocational education, youth support, affordable accommodation and community programming.

The Board's priorities have been designed to ensure our structure and support services are fit for purpose to support growth and expansion. These priorities have included a full corporate restructure and augmentation of our Risk management capacity, and a review and delivery of updated IT infrastructure, all designed to support staff delivering important services in the community.

The Board continues to place a priority on child safety and supports our Safeguarding Team to create and foster a culture that provides children and young people safe pathways to allow their voices to be heard.

Following an independent review by the Australian Childhood Foundation earlier this year, Y Queensland was awarded a rating of 'Excellence'. This rating reflects our commitment to the wellbeing and safety of the children and young people we serve.

Our brand transition from the YMCA to Y Queensland has been an important step to recognise our current footprint of service delivery and to give us the platform to deliver important services in other areas of need in Queensland. Some of the areas of expansion include the opening of Bundaberg Y Vocational School and Edwards Place affordable housing complex in Slacks Creek, named to honour the important contributions of Board member, Richard Edwards.

The post-COVID recovery continues with strong results, particularly in Fitness and Recreation and Hotel George Williams. One of the biggest challenges in the post-COVID world, affecting most organisations, is the attraction and retention of staff. We recognise the importance of positioning Y Queensland as an employer of choice and support the Executive and staff as they develop innovative ways to attract and engage talented and passionate future members of our team.

I thank my fellow Board members and Meg Woolf, whose continued support of the Board has been so important, and I acknowledge the death of long time CEO, Ross Melville. Ross's leadership in the early days of the Y has put us in the strong financial position we are in and who started the Y on the path to some of our most important social impact programs. VALE Ross.

In conclusion, my thoughts return to the Schools' Breakfast Program. This program, now entering its 18 year, is a beautiful example of how addressing a basic need in a child's life, a full tummy, can change that child's life trajectory. I am enormously proud of the work Y Queensland and its people do every day to deliver our Mission to empower young people to thrive, to feel part of their community and to have the ability and agency to change their communities in a positive way.

Thank you,

*Heather Allan*

**President of the Board**  
YMCA Queensland

# MESSAGE FROM THE Chief Executive Officer

DAMIAN FOLEY



I hope you have enjoyed reading about the impacts we have delivered for Queensland over the last year. Twelve months ago, I mentioned in this report how excited, fortunate and honoured I was to be taking over as CEO of the Y Queensland. Twelve months on, I am more enthusiastic and feel so privileged to be leading such a wonderful and impactful Organisation.

Our people drive everything at the Y and I am full of admiration and pride for the work of all our staff, and none more so than that of our Safeguarding team and more broadly, our staff approach to Safeguarding. The Y participated in an independent review at the start of this year with the Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF). It is the only accreditation scheme in Australia to have received endorsement by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

The Y Queensland were awarded a rating of 'Excellence' which is the highest possible rating. This achievement reflects all the hard work that the Y people put in to keeping children and young people safe and happy on a daily basis. Thanks so much to our staff for their exceptional work in this important space.

We have a lot to celebrate and have achieved an enormous amount in the last 12 months as reflected by the Impact Snapshot on page 6-7. We are focused on growth and it is wonderful to see that being achieved in so many of our key service areas. We have:

- Increased our government operational funding for our community centres
- Grown our school campuses from 8 to 10 campuses
- Our fitness and gymnastics business have performed better than forecast
- George Williams Hotel is performing very well and we have completed the refurbishment of level 8 of the hotel
- Opened a new Affordable Housing complex at Slacks Creek

This would be a long message indeed if I were to mention all our services individually, but so important to celebrate that our services have outperformed our expectations in almost all areas. Thank you to all of you who have contributed to that outcome.

We have also introduced a new corporate services stream in the past year, this being Risk and Compliance. This brings with it a renewed focus on ensuring we are delivering services in line with our full intentions and managing our appetite and tolerances in line with our corporate plans. Keeping our focus on excellence, we have made great strides in modernising our systems; especially that of IT. In all areas, we are ensuring that our IT offering is keeping us competitive and relevant for our staff and customer bases.

In July this year we launched our new Strategic Plan 2023/24 that sets some very clear targets for us in the 2023/24 year; the plan also sets out our aspirations for 2023/26. Our Plan sets out clearly that we have a focus in this current year to ensure our corporate functions are sound and will sustain the organisation on the growth trajectory on which we continue on. We will refine this plan annually and adjust according to the internal and external variables of our diverse business and the multitude of sectors with which we engage.

To this point, we have plans to expand our reach across more of our sunshine State. Hence, we have had a name change to the Y Queensland to more accurately reflect our current footprint, but also reflects our aspirations to grow and deliver more services more widely.

I take this opportunity to loudly and proudly say thank you to all our staff and volunteers. I am so proud to lead such an engaged, professional and dedicated group of people that have built and sustained this great organisation over so many years. We have such a highly engaged senior leadership team that care deeply about the Organisation and are supported by an equally engaged corporate services teams and programs teams. It is clear our staff live our Vision - to create healthy, connected and thriving communities, and I am so excited to be working with this amazing organisation to continue to do this and grow our impact in the coming years.

Thank you,

*Damian Foley*

**Chief Executive Officer**  
YMCA Queensland

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**Richard Edwards OAM**  
Board Member

We thank Danial Patava and Nelson Savanh, Invited Board Members between November 2022 and June 2023.

The Board and Management Committee of our Y give their time and expertise freely and generously to help us become a sustainable organisation that has a positive impact on communities across South East Queensland.

## Thank you to our supporters

The YMCA wishes to acknowledge and thank all of our supporters and donors who have contributed to the community impact achieved by our YMCA over the last twelve months.

### Funding Bodies

- Federal Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
- Brisbane City Council
- Ipswich City Council
- Moreton Bay Regional Council

### Queensland Government

- Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
- Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy
- Department of Environment and Science
- Department of Education
- Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
- Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport
- Department of Treaty, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities & the Arts
- Gambling Community Benefit Fund
- Queensland Independent Schools Block Grant Authority

### Foundations

- Clem Jones Foundation

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