

## **Ipswich Community Access Disability Services**

### **Internal and external partnerships close the gaps between clients and community**

#### **Summary**

Staff of the three programs which comprise Ipswich Community Access Disability Services (ICADS) go the extra mile to provide high-quality services to clients through a community development approach. ICADS functions as an integrated partnership within Ozcare and as a collaborative model of support in the wider community. Its success is based on bringing together relevant players who can provide a solution for each client if a gap is identified between the community and the client.

#### **Partners**

Within Ozcare:

- Community Access Service
- Resident Support Program
- Mozart Program

Wider community partners:

- Government services such as Queensland Health-West Moreton Health Service District, Centrelink, Office of the Public Trustee and Community Visitor
- Local businesses including boarding house and hostel owners and operators
- Local church-based and non-government agencies

#### **Background**

ICADS is run through Ozcare in Ipswich, bringing together a suite of support services for people with a disability.

#### **Drivers for collaboration**

Prior to the development of new service partnerships, Ozcare clients often received support services from a number of local agencies and government departments, leading to service duplication and confusion. For example, some clients were being case managed by a number of organisations.

The new collaborative framework allows agencies to identify and address barriers to achieving positive outcomes for a client.

### **The collaboration story**

ICADS commenced in 1999 with Ozcare's Community Access Service. This program assisted people with a psychiatric disability, acquired brain injury and young people with an intellectual disability and a co-existing mental illness, to connect with their local community. Ozcare adopted a community development framework to help make Ipswich a more inclusive community for people with a disability.

Two further programs have since been added. The community linking component of the targeted response model supported people with a disability living in privately owned hostels and boarding houses from 2001. This program is now the Resident Support Program funded by Queensland Health and Disability Services Queensland.

The third component, the Mozart Program, was added in 2004 to provide social and recreational activities for people in Ipswich, Boonah, Laidley and Esk shires.

The three services work closely together as they often have mutual clients. They also operate within the wider Ozcare network of services in Ipswich to provide seamless service delivery for clients. The community development approach taken by the ICADS services has led workers to develop collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders in the community. When ICADS began the coordinator identified services that were essential to help clients achieve good outcomes.

Over time new partnerships have been developed and others adapted as needs change and staff come and go, as the following examples demonstrate.

**Issue:** Some clients' mental health was unstable because they were unable to negotiate the mental health system.

**Solution:** ICADS staff built relationships with the Duty Intake Team of the Integrated Mental Health Service located at the Ipswich Health Plaza, the Mental Health Unit and Accident and Emergency Department of Ipswich Hospital, resulting in client access to services.

**Issue:** Clients had no accommodation following discharge from hospital.

Solution: ICADS, West Moreton Integrated Mental Health Services and Churches of Christ Care developed a joint venture agreement to provide two transitional houses for clients who were being discharged from hospital. Churches of Christ Housing Services managed property and tenancy issues while the other partners provided community access and joint case management.

### **Tools and strategies for collaboration**

- A formal partnership with Queensland Health agency, the Park Centre for Mental Health, defining responsibilities for joint activities. This agreement took a year to develop but has benefited clients.
- A formal joint venture agreement with Churches of Christ Care Housing and West Moreton Integrated Mental Health Services to provide transitional housing
- Informal relationships and partnerships with other agencies
- Regular monthly meetings with hostel owners and operators
- Meetings with other collaborative partners to discuss individual client need
- Regular attendance at existing networks including the West Moreton Health Services Liaison Network, Residential Hostels Closure Response Team, and the Mental Health Working Group.

### **Outcomes**

- Offer of transitional housing for people discharged from hospital
- Recurrent funding for an independent advocacy service for the West Moreton region, achieved through five years of work by a number of agencies and consumers
- A forum for hostel owners and operators to share information and work with others in the community
- A combined activity program for clients of ICADS and the Park Centre for Mental Health, with shared resources and responsibilities for program delivery
- A network of hostel owners and operators
- Some clients have had fewer admissions to the Ipswich Mental Health Unit because services were working together to provide timely and appropriate support to mutual clients.

### **Success factors for collaboration**

- Much of the drive and enthusiasm for building successful collaborative relationships comes from committed and qualified staff with the skills to operate with a holistic approach.
- Staff lived in Ipswich and had established links with the community.
- Relationships and networks helped staff access organisations and individuals in decision-making positions, leading to shared responsibility for ICADS's clients and provision of additional services for the client group.
- Staff required enormous skill, commitment and perseverance to achieve long-term and sustainable outcomes for individual clients.
- Breaking down the barriers created by individual agencies claiming 'ownership' of clients has increased the effectiveness and potential for client outcomes.
- It can be important to target specific staff within an organisation or business who are open to working in a collaborative or partnership model as there are greater chances of on-going and sustainable linkages between organisations.

### **Challenges**

- Collaborative partnerships require commitment on both sides and clear and frequent communication.
- In the early stages of a new partnership, both parties need to get to know each other, the philosophies of each service and limitations such as size and resources available .
- Commitment at a service delivery level is not enough to sustain a relationship. Senior management also needs to be committed to and understand what is required of the partnership.
- Staff turnover within services and government departments means relationships need to be consistently developed.

### **The future**

ICADS hopes to build on the existing partnership arrangements to:

- formalise partnerships with current informal partners
- source funding for one-off programs to enhance services to clients and source recurrent funding to extend programs to a broader geographic area, and
- investigate and implement ways to improve communication with clients.

### **For more information**

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