



COMMUNITY WORKS; RESEARCH PARTNERS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Capability statement on
research to support better
policy and practice



Community Works is an innovative company that delivers results for our partners in the field of social, community and economic development. Our specialisms include:

- » **Research**, including targeted literature reviews as well as monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment to generate insights and knowledge from projects to enable organisations to learn from their experience.
- » **Capacity strengthening and development**, especially designing and running training courses on a range of subjects including better development outcomes from mining, community mental health programs and community-based evaluation.
- » **Project management**, supporting organisations seeking to design and implement a new initiative or to achieve results from an existing project that has run into problems.
- » **Facilitation**, especially designing and managing complex workshops and seminars or to manage situations of conflict.
- » **Communication on development topics**, especially in cross-cultural settings and where visual methods are important.

The subject of this capability statement is our work in the field of research.

RESEARCH DESIGN FOR MAJOR POLICY-ORIENTATED PROGRAMS

Community Works has been a key partner or contributor to four consortia that have secured major funding for new research programs in the fields of social and economic development in Australia and internationally.

- » **Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, 2004-11**; a group of over sixty cross-sectoral partner organisations working nationally in Australia to generate knowledge for improved natural resource and economic development.
- » **Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, 2010-2015**; a ground-breaking mental health research initiative that achieved international impact. Funding secured was over A\$35 million.
- » **Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation, 2011-2017**; a national program in Australia working across universities, remote-based enterprises, Aboriginal communities and government agencies to develop better policy and practice in employment and remote economies. Funding secured was over A\$32 million.
- » **Cities for Mental Health, 2017 onwards**, which has so far attracted over US\$15 million from prominent private donors and will work on generating improved data, youth initiatives and collective action for mental health in thirty global cities from a starting point of six cities in 2017.

In each case, our expertise has been a key factor in the research design, development, winning of grant funding in conditions of high-level competition and eventual implementation of the resulting programs.

RESEARCH PROJECT EXAMPLE:

Applied research for improved services

Ninti One, the lead agency for two of the consortia above, has been working on research projects designed to establish new services or improve existing ones in towns and communities in remote Australia. Through our partnership, Community Works has contributed technical advice and support for almost a decade across a wide range of complex research challenges.

We have worked for several years on research to inform better design and delivery of services to remote areas in Australia and especially for Aboriginal communities. One major project involved 26 researchers from twelve organisations. This kind of research tends to use surveys of service users to determine their needs and expectations (such as services for homeless people), research on options for service models or arrangements that better meet those needs (an example being the needs of people with disabilities) and research on complex situations, such as income management, that call for focus groups and inclusive processes. We have played a lead role in almost forty publications resulting from our work on remote services.



COMMUNITY WORKS

Address

313/757 Bourke Street,
Docklands, Victoria 3008, Australia

Email

steve.fisher@communityworks.com.au

Telephone

+61 (0) 3 9005 7341

Website

www.comunityworks.com.au

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

The detailed work required to take an evaluation through the design stage, agreement on parameters such as population and sample size, the research itself and then the delivery of a high-quality analysis and report is core business for Community Works.

Since 2014 and in partnership with Pamodzi Consulting, we have made a leading contribution to three major international evaluations of programs of Amnesty Norway, especially their Education, Empowerment and Justice Program. Having delivered other work for Amnesty, Community Works is now a regular provider of services to the organisation.

We are often engaged to support research in the field of health. In 2016-17, we provided extensive technical contributions to the design, analysis and reporting of an evaluation of the National Trachoma Prevention Program managed by the Indigenous Eye Health Unit of Melbourne University. The evaluation itself was conducted by our partners Ninti One in multiple remote locations where prevalence of the disease is high. In particular, we sought to determine how effective the campaign's goanna figure, called Milpa, was in attracting attention of parents and children to the key health messages around 'clean faces, healthy eyes'.

Also in 2014, we conducted a survey of the clients of the Eritrean Community in Australia (ECA), enabling the organisation to gauge the quality of its services and consider ways to improve them.

RESEARCH PROJECT EXAMPLE:

Mid-term Review of a DfID program in the Western Region of Nepal

The Livelihood Education Development Society (LEADS) in Nepal manages a mental health and development program in partnership with BasicNeeds. The program focuses on improving access to community mental health services in two districts, Baglung and Myagdi, in the Western Region of the country. With support from the Department for International Development, the program has been operating since 2010.

Steve Fisher of Community Works conducted a monitoring visit to Pokhara, Nepal in April 2012 and worked with the team of LEADS to assess progress. He visited program partners and participants and reviewed the documentation for the program. The monitoring and evaluation process enabled LEADS to reflect on its work and plan for extending its activities to other districts. The needs for community mental health and development services in regional areas are very large. Data from the work of LEADS and BasicNeeds makes an invaluable contribution to policy and practice in this critical health area.

SUPPORT AND TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY-LED DATA COLLECTION

Community Works is a leading advisor on impact assessment to two major Australian Federal Government investments in Indigenous health:

- » **Stronger Communities for Children**, for which we have developed a community-based model that enables local community boards to collect and analyse information on the impact of investments on services within the community. The model has been implemented in four remote communities in Australia.



- » **Tackling Indigenous Smoking**, part of the government's Closing the Gap agenda. Our team has been integrated into the National Best Practice Unit managed by Ninti One to provide technical support on approaches to collecting data by health workers that provides an evidence base on the results of government-funded health promotion.

In 2016 our team designed and conducted one- and two-day training workshops at 23 community health services across the Australia, working with Aboriginal health worker teams. The purpose was to support them in developing culturally-located methods for measuring the results of their health promotion activities, thus building skills and competencies in data collection and analysis. Working within a complex cross-cultural framework, the participatory sessions enable people new to research methods to practise the skills required to conduct surveys, interviews, focus groups and case studies.

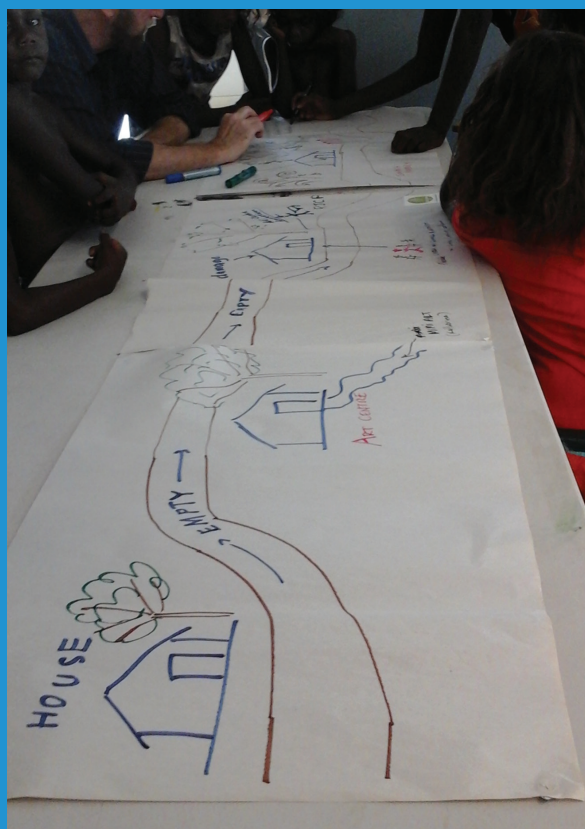
RESEARCH PROJECT EXAMPLE:

What a community arts centre is for

In 2015-16, we worked with the community of Minyerri through a project managed by Enterprise Learning Projects (ELP) for The Smith Family. The work is part of the Australian Government-funded Communities for Children program.

Our job was to help the people running the Arts Centre and ELP work out a way of planning and measuring the results of the work they would be doing at the Centre into the future. Discussing this framework with the women at the Arts Centre led to one important question; what is the Minyerri Arts Centre for? There are many answers to this question. As we talked about it, the conversation produced a set of outcomes that define what they are trying to achieve. Outcomes include sharing of knowledge between older and younger generations in the community, developing new skills, building self-esteem of children and young people and strengthening connections that they have with their history and culture.

In our second visit, we helped local residents working at Minyerri Arts Centre collect and analyse information on the outcomes being achieved. This work led to the production of an impact statement in the form of a visual mind map.



NEEDS ASSESSMENTS AND COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL ISSUES

In line with our commitment to quality processes for community engagement and participatory consultation on major decisions that affect local lives, Community Works has developed specialised approaches to researching local views. They include cross-cultural and visually-based methods for seeking reactions and opinions on a range of topics from infrastructure and mining development to improvements in health and social services.

As part of the pilot phase of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in the Northern Territory and South Australia, we have provided support to a team of Aboriginal Community Researchers established in two regions by Ninti One. The purpose of the research was to gauge the needs of future users of the NDIS and to present a summary of community perspectives on disability.

In Ceduna, we helped Ninti One conduct interviews with a large number of rough sleepers and also ran focus groups and a survey on community attitudes to income management, a proposed government initiative that has since been implemented in the region.

Community Works is also active in peace and conflict research, especially through our contributions to the masters programs in conflict resolution at James Cook University and ongoing involvement in mining-related programs and support for effort to counter violent extremism in Australia.

People feel sad if they can't go out bush. Their mums and dads taught them how to live on the land and they want to show the kids and sit around the campfire. Getting up early and cooking is good for them. Talking at night happens.

Some people talk about going back to their homelands but there are no renal machines out bush.



RESEARCH FOR REPLICATION AND SCALING

When organisations seek to scale up their work through social licensing, franchising or more conventional partnership arrangements, they often need research support. We have assisted organisations to apply criteria for the selection of new locations for scaling, such as neighbouring regions or countries. In one case, this work required the development of a comparative tool for StrongMinds, a Ugandan NGO, to enable criteria such as the policy environment, local needs, presence of other NGOs, completion and other measures to be applied across over forty potential locations.

Our core research work for replication and scaling is in the development of toolkits, which comes from the interest of many organisations in formalising the methods and models that underlie their practice. Often, this interest stems from a desire to scale up their work, often putting it in the hands of new partners. A toolkit contains one or more documents that present the approach, procedures and methodologies of a service or model. They are helpful for organisations that want to expand or scale up their model, serving as a way of transmitting the information and orienting decision-makers, Program Managers and field-based workers that will implement it. A challenge in toolkit development is to isolate the 'key ingredients' of the model. We have developed methods for teasing out which elements of a model are essential, and which may need to be adapted to suit different cultures and contexts.

We have produced toolkits for the Rangoonwala Community Centre program in Mumbai, StrongMinds and Amnesty International. We have also been engaged to provide design and implementation support for the scaling of major programs including the USAID Yaaajeende Agriculture and Nutrition Development Program for Food Security in Senegal and for Population Services International (PSI) in Central America, part of the largest health services franchise in the world.

RESEARCH PROJECT EXAMPLE:

Decentralising social services in Paraguay

Community Works maintains a strong cultural and language capability for work with partners in Latin America. This includes work on nine Australia Award Fellowship projects secured through our partner the Queensland University of Technology for eight countries in the region.

In 2012, the Government of Paraguay started a program to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its social services. As part of this initiative, Community Works was invited to facilitate a project managed by GIZ, the German Agency for International Cooperation. A key component of the project was a research process with a group of senior staff from Paraguay, who made visits to State, Federal and local government service agencies in Australia to generate knowledge relevant to their policy aims. The research culminated in a colloquium on 'Critical factors in improved service coordination in Paraguay' held at Victoria University in which the findings of the delegation were presented and discussed.



ACTION RESEARCH FOR BETTER PRACTICE

The process of reviewing the work of an organisation, conducting desk-based research on similar practice and then developing a description of the methods it uses, can yield multiple benefits. Importantly, it formalises the work of the organisation that might have been many years in refinement but never committed to paper. It instils confidence in the work and builds support for it. And the process can bring new insights as a result of the research undertaken.

An excellent recent example comes from a project Community Works managed for Uniting GriefWork, a free service offered to people living in Victoria who have been bereaved by the work-related death of a loved one. Based on previous work that Community Works had successfully conducted for another Uniting agency, CMN approached us with the aim of documenting the Program Design of their service. Our team conducted qualitative research by engaging key stakeholders, including current and past clients, and assessing similar companioning models. Ingrid Horton produced a range of graphics to enable the final report to communicate complex analyses in a visual way.

PROJECT EXAMPLE:

A model of practice for family mediation

Relationships Australia NT invited Community Works to work with the organisation in a one-year action research project to address the question 'what would it take to improve mediation services for remote communities?' The project was completed in April.

Relationships Australia is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation that helps people strengthen and build relationships or resolve issues arising from relationship breakdown. Separating Aboriginal couples face challenges that are distinct from those of non-Aboriginal people. These include cultural factors, different perspectives on the settlement of a dispute and expectations of the process itself.

Relationships Australia NT saw the need to examine its practice against contemporary mainstream models of mediation practice. It sought to identify key elements of mediation practice, understand how they apply and then commit the experience gained to a formal model. The resulting model of practice for mediation with Aboriginal families was represented in a publication disseminated throughout the organisation.

COMPLEXITY-DEVELOPMENT

The essence of Community Works is collaboration. We always work with other organisations in roles that include long-term advisory support, representational arrangements, shared problem-solving or major initiatives that often include research. We are proud to currently be working as:

- » Representatives of the UK-based **Spring Impact** in Australia, for which Steve Fisher is Country Director
- » Partners to the US-based **Global Development Incubator**, performing multiple roles for its major citiesRISE program that focusses on achieving outcomes aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals
- » Advisors to the **World Psychiatric Association**, working directly with the President, Prof. Helen Herrman
- » Partners of **Ninti One**, Australia's leading remote area research institution
- » Representatives in Australia of **BasicNeeds**, an international NGO that implements community mental health programs in Asia, Africa, the UK and USA
- » Evaluators of submissions to **Frontier Innovators**, a DFAT-funded program to support social enterprise across the Asia-Pacific Region
- » Advisors on strategy and growth to the **Parent-Infant Research Institute** and especially its director, Prof. Jeannette Milgrom
- » Partners in the international scaling strategy for Drumbeat, a music-based therapy program of **Holyoake**, the Australian Institute for Alcohol and Drug Addiction Resolutions.

BUILDING
harmony
MAKING
connections



6

A group of people are gathered in a natural, outdoor setting, possibly a savanna or dry woodland. A man on the left is sitting on a blue mat, holding a large, colorful patterned cloth. He is addressing a group of people sitting in a circle around him. In the foreground, a small fire is burning in a metal container. The background shows a large tree and a hilly landscape under a cloudy sky. A small orange box with the number '6' is in the top right corner.

[illegible]

A group of people, including a woman in a purple cap and pink shirt, are sitting on the ground outdoors in a forest clearing. They appear to be engaged in a community activity or discussion. The woman in the purple cap is smiling and looking towards the group. Other people are sitting around her, some looking at her and others looking away. The background shows a dirt path and trees.

Director
Steve Fisher

Email
steve.fisher@communityworks.com.au

Website
www.comunityworks.com.au

Website
www.comunityworks.com.au

