

# Community Resource Centres

At the heart of regional Western Australian Communities  
In the hearts of Western Australians



**#morethanjustasmartphone**  
**#strengthinplace**  
**#smallinvestmentbigimpact**

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# a statewide network of unsung heroes

**A**cross regional Western Australia – from Walpole to Kalumburu and everywhere in between – a network of 105 small, not-for-profits provides essential services and brings together individuals, families, and communities. This is the network of Community Resource Centres (CRCs): the unsung heroes of regional and remote communities.

CRCs are community hubs, locally governed and locally staffed, and their success is based on their strong links with, and deep knowledge of, their local communities.

The majority of CRCs (87% at time of writing) are located in towns with populations of 3,000 or less, but the services they provide have grown and developed from their initial mission of providing technology points in regional areas <sup>1</sup>.

While a key component of their service continues to be providing access to, and support with, technology, CRCs also offer support and training to local businesses; opportunities for individuals and families to work, play, and learn; and vital access to government services.

Three key principles apply to the Community Resource Centre Network (CRN): place-based, community-led, and grass-roots. These principles are at the core of the networks' success.

Great work happens daily in these place-based community hubs. This document is intended to unearth just a fraction of the community building and development quietly being achieved, as well as provide an overview of this vital network of regional and remote not-for-profits.





▲ The Gingin CRC offers a modern, welcoming space for the community and visitors to access a range of programs and services

## From Telecentres to CRCs

### – a History of the WA Community Resource Centre Network

CRCs started as Telecentres in 1991, with the opening of the first centre in Broome. They are part of WA's longest running regional and remote community services program, and the WA Community Resource Network (WACRN) now includes CRCs in over 100 communities.

Telecentres were originally established to provide Internet access, and as remote learning centres in small to medium regional towns – most with populations of 3,000 or less. The network of Telecentres grew organically based on expressions of interest from communities wanting to establish a centre. Originally, all Telecentres were managed as not-for-profit organisations registered under the Associations Incorporations Act, however, this has expanded over time to include Aboriginal Corporations and local government-managed CRCs.

### **Changing with the Times**

In 2009, Telecentres were rebranded to be Community Resource Centres, and an increase of funding was provided through the Royalties for Regions fund. This boost in funding – from approximately \$20k to \$100K per year – was an acknowledgement of the pivotal role CRCs play in regional WA, and provided CRCs the opportunity to expand their services to better meet the changing needs of communities.

# strong purpose, clear vision

While each CRC is as different as the communities they serve, the network has a number of over-arching outcomes all CRCs aim to achieve:

- ✓ Community members are provided with access to state government and community **information and services**
- ✓ Local businesses and the workforce have access to activities and initiatives that **improve skills and capacity** to foster economic growth in the local community
- ✓ Community members have access to activities and initiatives that create or **improve community connectedness** and capacity



▲ A meeting of the generations at Boyup Brook CRC

## what do CRCs do?

Some might argue that the most important thing that CRCs do is provide a place for people to connect. This reduces isolation, brings communities together, and alleviates some of the challenges of rural and remote living.

In addition to this essential service, CRCs also provide:

- Training and education – including certified – opportunities to their local communities
- Access to government services – including: Centrelink, Medicare, and TransWA ticketing
- Training and support to local businesses
- Access to health information and education through other NPFs – such as parenting courses by Ngala and healthy eating programs by FoodBank WA
- Local tourism information – around 20 CRCs also act as Visitor Centres
- Social Events
- Access to the Internet, room hire, printing services, library book exchange, local newspaper, banking, and much more.

# There's Strength in Place

Much of the social and community services, in Western Australia and elsewhere, have been designed to support people through crises.

These services tend to focus on prescribing general solutions to local problems, instead of empowering local communities to take a preventative approach, and address emerging needs or background issues.

**Place-based approaches** are a way of developing and delivering local solutions to local problems. They can focus on prevention and early intervention approaches in addition to crisis services, to help support people and solve issues before problems escalate.

Place-based approaches can increase people's participation in education and training, and increase local employment opportunities, which combined, will help people target the causes of poverty, and overcome it in the longer term <sup>3</sup>.

## The Community Resource Centre sector IS place-based

Many of these small, community-managed centres have been entrenched in their communities for over 25 years, building on the strengths and assets that already exist within their communities.

CRCs have a vital role to play in the achievement of local, state and federal government social outcomes. However, they require resources, support and flexible funding to do this. They also need the government to recognise and acknowledge, *in policy*, the importance of these place-based organisations to their local communities, as opposed to being stuck in the cycle of having to 'prove their worth' to each successive government.



◀ The Augusta community will always find a warm welcome and helpful and knowledgeable staff at their local CRC.

CRCs operate mainly in the preventative domain. They provide critical primary prevention in the shape of community education and awareness raising. Being hubs in their communities, CRCs are a natural place to provide community education and support on a broad range of essential issues, by a range of NFPs, government agencies, and professionals.

Regional and remote places are not like other places. The issues faced by these communities are different from the issues faced by communities in larger towns, or metropolitan areas. These include: a lack of infrastructure, unemployment, a changing workforce, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation, health, education, access to social services, climate change, natural resource management, and agriculture <sup>4</sup>.

CRCs are inextricably linked to the communities they are based in.

They were established by those communities, are run by the community for the community, and ceaselessly empower local individuals, families, and organisations.

In addition, regional and remote communities constantly face the tyranny of distance and isolation. Isolation and loneliness are recognised as major contributors to poor health. CRCs reduce both the prevalence and effect of these by providing an inclusive social and community hub, as well as services that metropolitan communities take for granted.

*CRCs represent their local communities – therefore the services they provide are best placed to cater to the needs of individuals and families.*

Having these local hubs is essential, not only to provide equity for people in regional communities, but also to provide equity to the unemployed, those of a low socio-economic background, the elderly, or people with disabilities. For those within these demographics, travel to access services is not always possible.

The Wellstead community had an opportunity to show off and share their skills and their wares at a *Craft, Cultivation and Cuisine* day organised by the local CRC. ▶



# Community Participation

CRCs operate in a localised way to **respond to a range of issues and opportunities**. They have capacity for flexibility and responsiveness and to shift priorities and resources as new needs emerge. They work in ways that engage local people in local solutions and as such play a critical role in community capacity building.

CRCs provide, via their video conferencing platform, **regional access to services** that people in metro areas take for granted. These services include health and wellbeing, such as parenting workshops, counselling for new mothers, and healthy eating workshops (delivered by Ngala and Foodbank WA).

CRCs offer a **vital access point** to a range of local, state and federal government services to those in regional and remote areas.

CRCs **create a sense of community** in places where isolation is a major problem. The detrimental impact of isolation and loneliness has been proven, as has the link between these and increased rates of suicide and poor health outcomes.

In many towns, CRCs are hubs that **coordinate emergency support operations**, such as relief services to SES and DFES, and provide support to the community during times of natural disaster. This is especially important in towns where emergency services are voluntary. Various CRCs have provided this service in times of emergency, such as floods and fires.

## community **participation**: the numbers<sup>7</sup>

127,512

The number of **participants in community initiatives and events** run by CRCs between 2014 and 2017

25,646

The number of **participants in business development initiatives and seminars** run by CRCs between 2014 and 2017

55,145

The number of people who **accessed government services through CRCs** between 2014 and 2017

This number more than doubled from 11,283 people in 2014 to 25,112 people in 2017



# Quality-accredited daycare empowers local women

I am a mother of two young boys (three years and four years), and farm with my husband and his family. In addition, I work part-time as the coordinator of a state-wide not for profit organisation, *Partners in Grain WA*. My CRC is invaluable to me and my young family.

Our CRC runs our local daycare centre; the next closest daycare facility is 55km or 100km away. Without this wonderful daycare centre – which received a rating of *Exceed NQS* in its National Quality Standards Assessment in February of this year – I would not be able to undertake off-farm work and my contribution to my farm business would be minimal.

*I am not alone. Many women in our community currently use our daycare, which enables them to uptake roles as employees and contractors and contribute to their own businesses.*

Without our CRC taking the initiative three years ago to open our daycare, it is highly unlikely that any of these women could work in the roles that they do and to the capacity that they do.

And daycare is just one of the services that our CRC provides.

Our CRC also runs our post office (people in our cities just take this for granted), a facility that is absolutely vital when you live 400km from Perth and 100km from the nearest regional centre.

The CRC also runs the retirees social group on Friday mornings at the Mingenew Autumn Centre where they play board and card games, undertake activities, play bingo and finish with a bring and share lunch. It is very well run and very popular. Mingenew has a large retiree population and for those that don't have their own transport (or can no longer drive, or can't afford the fuel) this is the only social outing that they attend each week.

The CRC also offers printing and graphic design services. I am on the Board of the Mingenew Midwest Expo and oversee the Marketing and Communications of this large agricultural event. We utilise both the graphic design and printing services of the CRC – without this we would be solely reliant on commercial printers 100km and 400km away which impacts upon timing, Expo's limited HR resources and expense.

There are many other things our Mingenew CRC does. These are just the few that I use on a weekly basis. Reducing funding to CRCs will have a detrimental impact on my regional community and my family – and remember, we are just one of many CRCs across WA.

*Hellene McTaggart  
Coordinator, Partners in Grain WA Inc.  
Mingenew WA*



“ In rural WA, they [CRCs] have become really important, not just as hubs but as places for people to meet and connect, and with technology that we can all access. It is money well spent in the regions. ”

- Interview 44:  
Focus group - community stakeholders<sup>2</sup>

## CRCs as community hubs

The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (2009) defines a community hub as: the complex system of physical facilities, programs and social networks that aim to improve people's quality of life. These services, networks and physical assets work together to form the foundation of a strong neighbourhood.

Community hubs generally have limited revenue streams, many of their benefits are broader than the municipal level, and they form a part of the government obligation to provide for communities<sup>8</sup>.

### Characteristics of a GOOD community hub

Not surprisingly, CRCs tick all the boxes:

- Located in an activity centre or node
- Provide a focal point for the community
- Contain a number of (related) services and facilities
- Have an inter-generational focus
- Be "owned" by the community

CRCs are much more than the buildings they occupy and the facilities they offer. They are safe gathering places for people to connect, learn and grow: places where community is built.

“ I love my CRC because it is the hub of our community wellbeing and it provides childcare, which is extremely important in keeping our children safe. ”

- Interview 44:  
Focus group - community stakeholders<sup>2</sup>

## How are CRCs run?

Most CRCs (around 85) are incorporated associations governed by a local management committee. Around 15 are managed by their local Shire, and 4 are run by Aboriginal Corporations.

Being community-run organisations means that CRCs are operated **by their community for their community**. It also means that no CRC is the same – much like no community is the same. CRCs are able to respond quickly to their communities' needs and to tailor their services to the families and individuals that use them.

Being community-run also means that volunteers are a lifeblood, contributing countless hours and value, without adding to the Centre's operational costs.

## The top **five** facts about the Community Resource Centre (CRN) **network**:

1. CRCs have very high levels of community awareness and use. In a survey of 2,400 randomly chosen households in regional WA, around 90% of households were aware of CRCs and almost three quarters (74%) had accessed their CRC at some stage in the prior two years<sup>2</sup>
2. CRCs are regarded as providing excellent service, with good staff, and are seen essential to retain in the community<sup>2</sup>
3. The CRN employs 395 people in regional and remote WA<sup>1</sup>
4. Over 1,000 volunteers support the CRCs<sup>1</sup>
5. Through the CRN Traineeship Program, 497 rural/remote people have had the opportunity to be upskilled by CRCs<sup>1</sup>

## volunteering

Around 1,000 West Australians each contribute an average of 88 hours of volunteer work per year to support CRCs

This equates to **\$3.16 million** of labour over a year<sup>14</sup>

Volunteering benefits the community as well as the individual:

- ✓ Volunteering activities raise the awareness of volunteers regarding social issues and can mobilise community members for community building actions
- ✓ Volunteering is found to be closely correlated with high levels of civic engagement
- ✓ It plays an important role in strengthening social capital and has been shown to lead to improved health outcomes as well as being an identified pathway into paid employment

▶  
The volunteer troops are ready for their litter drive on the Brand Highway



# The top **five** issues facing towns where CRCs are located<sup>1</sup>:

As identified by the CRCs...

1. Unemployment
2. Social isolation
3. Lack of access to technology
4. Declining population
5. High cost of living



▲ Roadtrip! Lancelin residents ready for a day trip to the city, organised by the Lancelin CRC

- ▼ For small communities with limited opportunities for 'retail therapy', a pop-up shop day, such as that organised by the Wyalkatchem CRC, is a much anticipated event



# The top **five** issues CRCs help to lessen the impact of in their communities<sup>1</sup>:

As identified by the CRCs...

1. Lack of access to technology
2. Social isolation
3. Social Inclusion of all community groups
4. Unemployment
5. Distance from regional or metropolitan centre

# CRCs: a key element of social infrastructure<sup>9</sup>

There are many challenges currently facing Australian society, and some of these challenges are unique to regional and remote communities. Tackling social problems requires policies aimed at delivering stronger and more cost-effective services to improve outcomes for children and families.

Around the world, research indicates that the success of such services is intimately connected to the level of engagement of the community itself. Without local buy-in, the effectiveness of programs suffers.

CRCs are uniquely placed to play a strong role in the delivery of a whole range of social services. Being embedded in the community, these centres can contribute significantly to improving the lives of children and young people, families and the elderly, within their neighbourhoods.

The infrastructure provided by centres can be quickly mobilised, expanded or readjusted to respond to local needs, emerging issues, or opportunities.

CRCs improve outcomes for children and families in three main ways, by:

- Providing a range of direct services
- Acting as a conduit to other services
- Providing indirect benefits such as improving social networks and building social capital

Key findings also indicate that preventive and positive development programs are the most cost-effective. This preventive and positive approach forms the basis of programs, activities and services offered by CRCs.

“ The wonderful thing about CRCs is they are always asking us what we want, what they can do for us. The only thing that is limited is our imagination [...] and of course funding. ”

- Interview 44:  
Focus group - community stakeholders<sup>2</sup>

# building community strengthening people

Most CRCs see their main role as servicing and promoting their local communities, and they pride themselves on being responsive to local demands and needs. They regard their centres as being crucial to **filling in the gaps** left by government (at all levels), and businesses and other groups who are unable or unwilling to provide services or facilities in small and often isolated towns <sup>2</sup>.

In addition, CRCs are places where members of the **community can connect** and where individuals, businesses, and community groups can **access support, training, and resources**. They see CRCs as providing the 'social glue' that helps to bind the community together. CRCs generally offer a mix of direct service delivery and community development programs and operate as a base for a range of local activities, information and referral services <sup>2</sup>.

Being part of the community means that **community development and engagement** comes naturally to CRCs. They are constantly consulting with their communities to make sure their services are relevant to ever changing needs.

Measurable outcomes of community development include<sup>10</sup>:

- Reduction of isolation and alienation
- Increase in social capital and cooperation
- Creation or improvement of bona-fide community groups
- Increase in opportunities for activity in the community
- More effective community activity
- Increase in volunteering
- Improvement in dialogue between community and authorities
- Coherence and effectiveness of public policies
- Capacity of agencies, authorities and professions to engage with communities

▼ Wellstead's volunteer fire brigade are briefed at the local CRC





## Delivering *Food Sensations*<sup>®</sup> to the regions – without being in the regions

Through network-wide access to *BeingThere's* secure video conference platform, and partnerships with experts in a range of fields, CRCs provide regional access to services people in metropolitan areas take for granted: employability services, parenting workshops, counselling for new mothers, and healthy eating workshops.

One such expert partner is *Foodbank WA*; a not-for-profit organisation which acts as a pantry to the charities and community groups who feed the hungry. Foodbank WA has been using CRCs and their video conference platform to deliver their *Food Sensations*<sup>®</sup> for Adults program since 2013.

*Food Sensations*<sup>®</sup> for Adults is a free nutrition and cooking program that is hands-on, fun, and provides a safe environment to try new recipes and skills. Since October 2013, they have delivered programs to 396 individuals through 40 CRCs, and across 5 different regions: the Wheatbelt, Mid West, Great Southern, South West and Gascoyne.

### Why does Foodbank WA use the Community Resource Centre Network to deliver services?

As Foodbank WA is based in Perth, using CRCs and video conference technology means they can **reach a much broader range of rural communities, at a fraction of the cost**. Foodbank WA also believes that CRCs are a great place to run community programs as they are well-established and trusted local hubs.

### What are the benefits to CRCs and communities?

The *Food Sensations*<sup>®</sup> for Adults program has been a big success with the CRCs that have run it. It is a fun and creative way of learning about nutrition and experimenting with cooking. Foodbank WA provides a comprehensive resource pack, including information on nutrition and easy-to-follow recipes.

A significant benefit to CRCs is that they get to partner with a great NFP and contribute towards the health of their communities. In addition, participants get the chance to make new friends, get to know their local CRC, and cook fast, healthy and delicious food.

## CRCs make a **difference** in their **communities** by

- ✓ **Working with other agencies** and using their secure video conference platform to bring in services that would otherwise be unavailable. Partners delivering these services include: Ngala, Skill Hire, Foodbank WA, Rural in Reach, and Community Legal Centres.
- ✓ **Connecting people with essential government services.** For example, around 60 CRCs receive federal funding from the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide services - including Centrelink and Medicare. More than 1,000 DHS clients access services through CRCs per week, and each CRC spends approximately 4 hours per week to provide one-on-one support <sup>11</sup>.
- ✓ **Listening** to their community.

## Dowerin CRC's Australia Day 2018 Community Citizen of the Year

In a special presentation by the Shire of Dowerin, Lynley Arnott, Coordinator of the Dowerin CRC, received the Australia Day 2018 Community Citizen of the Year award. This award recognises an individual who "Fosters Australian pride and spirit through active citizenship and outstanding contribution to community".

Lynley's contribution to the community of Dowerin in her time as CRC Coordinator is impressive. Outside of her work environment and commitments, Lynley is involved in the Streetscape Committee, Work Camp Liaison Committee, DDHS School Board & Student Leadership Committee, and is treasurer for the Wheatbelt Warblers and Anglican Parish. Lynley's passion for Dowerin and the community is evident by her active engagement with many members across the whole community, helping them to be involved, and coming up with ideas for the community to explore and develop.

Lynley continues to advocate for her community, "Our town has a wonderful capacity to achieve, I look forward to being a part of its ongoing success. The future of rural communities will more and more lie with our own hands and initiatives, as funding and recognition of rural contribution to society is undermined, so it is up to each and every one of us to ensure we do not become marginalised and taken for granted."

▼ Lynley (centre) with Dowerin Shire councillors Bev Ward (left) and Julie Chatfield (right)





# three CRC initiatives making a difference

## Narembeen CRC

### **S.O.C.K. Week – Save Our Country Kids**

In 2016, the Narembeen and Bruce Rock communities were rocked by four road fatalities – all young kids. In response, in 2017, the Narembeen CRC organised and ran their inaugural S.O.C.K. Week, aiming to raise awareness of road safety and promote safe, legal and responsible road use to reduce road casualties and the impact this has on families and the community as a whole.

Some of the activities included:

- The local school decorated disposable coffee cups, which were given to people buying coffee from the Roadhouse
- Free coffee was provided to drivers at the Roadhouse
- A memorial was held for those that have been lost or injured

## Mingenew CRC

### **It's OK not to be OK! – Men's Mental Health Roadshow**

In 2017, Mingeneew CRC's response to a number of events that negatively impacted the mental health of their community members was plan a major initiative: *It's OK not to be OK!*

This came at a time when the percentage of overall community members dealing with mental health issues was at an all-time high, and when increased attention and resources were being directed towards mental health issues.

The CRC organised speakers and delivered workshops focusing on men's mental health, bullying in boys, and other issues faced by adolescent boys and men. Ultimately, the goals of the *It's OK not to be OK!* initiative are to improve the mental health of regional communities, shine a light on men's mental health, and create a society that is prepared to acknowledge and deal with mental health issues in an open and healthy manner.

## Nannup CRC and Greenbushes CRC

### **CORENA Projects**

CORENA is a not-for-profit group with nationwide membership. It uses community contributions to provide interest-free loans to community organisations to pay for solar installations and energy efficiency measures. They repay the loan over time out of the savings on their power bills, and their repayments help fund subsequent projects. CORENA provides a practical and effective way for 'the people' to collectively fund new renewable energy installations NOW instead of just waiting on government action.

As CRCs are generally ahead of the technology curve, it's no surprise that two CRCs – Nannup and Greenbushes – have signed up for CORENA projects. They now enjoy a combined saving on their energy bills of almost \$6,000 per year, as well as the warm and gratifying feeling of having done the environment some good (which is priceless).

## The top **five** programs, activities and services CRCs provide<sup>6</sup>:

1. Information and referral
2. Community events/ festivals/ markets
3. Business services e.g. public computer, Internet access, printers
4. Computer training/ digital literacy
5. Senior's programs



“Retaining genuinely community-based organisations and resisting incorporation into uniform and disconnected mega-organisations is vital to our communities’ health.”

– Carmen Lawrence, Linkwest Patron

## Building Inclusive and Resilient Communities

In 2009, the Australian Social Inclusion Board (disbanded in 2012) developed a document outlining methods and approaches to building inclusive and resilient communities. Many of the methods and approaches outlined are core to the work of CRCs:

- Understand the community in terms of its composition, strengths, vulnerabilities and attitudes
- Work with, and embrace, diversity
- Promote community leadership to set priorities and promote a sense of purpose
- Build a strong and diverse local economy
- Build strong networks and support
- Promote learning and innovation

## The top **five** ways CRCs build resilience in their communities:

1. Reducing social isolation
2. Acting as hubs that coordinate emergency support operations and provide support to community and visitors in times of crisis
3. Providing learning opportunities to their community
4. Supporting their local economy – both through the provision of jobs and volunteering opportunities and through the support provided local businesses
5. Supporting local groups, such as small sporting clubs, that enrich the community

# investing in regional and remote western australia

CRCs invest in their local communities through the opportunities they provide. They invest both in people and in local businesses and community groups, and this is essential to the growth and health of regional communities.

38 CRCs are co-located with libraries; around twenty CRCs also operate as Visitor Centres; and almost all provide tourist information – again, supporting the local economy. Some also offer banking, postal, and transport/licencing facilities<sup>2</sup>.

Everything CRCs do supports the local economy, either directly or indirectly.

There are the **direct contributions**, such as providing work and volunteering opportunities or providing training to local businesses. But there are also the equally important **indirect contributions**, such as providing childcare (making it possible for people to work), acting as a social hub, and reducing isolation, which in turn reduces the related cost of its negative effects: depression, suicide, and poor health outcomes.

## Community Education

One of the key roles of CRCs is to provide essential informal and non-formal learning, generally either for free or at a heavily reduced rate.

Informal learning is a spontaneous process, which helps people to learn information in a new way. It can be anything from teaching a friend how to drive, to learning a new language through a social group. Informal learning helps to cultivate communities, associations and relationships that make for a positive learning environment<sup>13</sup>.

Non-formal learning is structured learning that does not provide official degrees or certification. Non-formal learning (such as language classes, creative workshops, business skills etc.) does however provide an essential route into formal learning, especially for people who are reluctant to join, or are intimidated by, the formal learning environment.

The type of community education that CRCs provide depends on the individual communities, but encompasses everything from meditation to MYOB; from basket weaving to web design; and from cooking to customer service. CRCs also provide certified training through their partnerships with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

## Traineeships

Through the CRN Traineeship Program, 497 rural and remote people have had the opportunity to be upskilled<sup>1</sup>.

Many of the trainees have gone on to work in their local community, and some have gained employment as managers of the CRCs where they completed their traineeship.

The type of certification varies depending on the need of the community, but includes certification in business administration; horticulture; tourism; IT; bookkeeping; human resources; accounting; and community services<sup>1</sup>.

## Local Business Support

CRCs provide training and support to local business, which in turn supports the local economy. As an example, *Lamartij Cultural Tours* was established with support from Broome CRC, which provided access to, and assistance with, technology to the founder Edwin Mulligan.

## Work and Volunteering Opportunities

The CRN employs 395 people in regional and remote WA, and approximately 1,000 volunteers support the CRCs<sup>1</sup>.

There is an average of seven members serving on the Management Committee or Board of each CRC. These management committee roles are not only personally satisfying, but provide a valuable skill set: financial acumen, strategic thinking, marketing and promotion, human resources, and knowledge of current relevant legislation.



▲ Kalannie CRC manager, Bree Franz, delivers a CoDesign project update at Linkwest's 2017 Belonging Conference

## From Perth to Kalannie | Trainee to Manager

Hard work and love for a “beautiful little town” sees Bree evolve from city girl into manager of a Wheatbelt CRC

Originally from Parkerville in Perth, Bree was lined up to work in the family business but fate intervened, and her heart led her to Kalannie, a small town in the Shire of Dalwallinu located on the boundaries of grain growing stations and mining country. Kalannie is a community of around 300 people, and due to its location (well off the tourist trail), it does not have the benefit of much ‘passing traffic’ or a wide selection of entertainment or shops.

Bree found work as coordinator for the Kalannie Telecentre (later to become the CRC). The time she spent in what she describes as her “beautiful little town” ignited a passion for her community’s well-being. Wanting to discover more of the workings of the agricultural side of the region, Bree left the Telecentre to pursue a range of part-time jobs, including seasonal farm work.

Time took her back to the Kalannie Community Resource Centre (nee Telecentre) where she secured a traineeship under the CRN Traineeship program. During this period, she began studying for a Bachelor of Arts in Community Development and Sustainable Development at Murdoch University. Bree’s dedication and passion for community was evident: she continued her University studies online, while working full time to complete all the requirements of her traineeship.

All her hard work paid off. The traineeship led her to becoming manager of the CRC. Now an active member of the CRC family, Bree can always be relied on for her enthusiasm and creativity, and she has brought many new initiatives to her community - including being a Centre partner in Linkwest’s CoDesign for Thriving Communities project.

“ If a CRC employs two or three people then that’s assisting families and that assists my business – that’s a bit of turnabout within the community. It keeps the community vibrant and has effects on the social fabric. ”

- Interview 18:  
Focus group - business stakeholders<sup>2</sup>

# Speaking out in Support of CRCs

I have been heavily involved with the Bremer Bay CRC from its inception as a Telecentre. I firstly became a volunteer then went on to holding positions as Secretary to President, to now being employed on a part-time basis. This personal growth has stemmed from having opportunities to learn and discover new skills that have been offered through the CRC network.

Bremer Bay CRC is as I feel about most CRCs – a hub of its community, and a discovery of what gives “LIFE” to our small but vibrant country towns.

The Bremer Bay CRC is successful in:

- Giving the community access to the latest technology, increasing community connectivity, and providing access to programs that are not easy accessible in our remote community.
- Maintaining a fully staffed facility that provides a meeting place for local businesses, community groups, local government and all other stakeholders.
- Continually building our community by making a sense of place, meeting with local needs, facilitating person-to-person skills and sharing these skills.
- Catering to the wider community with events and activities that are developed by using local customer-driven ideas.
- Highlighting the value of our seniors as current and past community members, and promoting self-discovery and self-worth in this segment of our community.
- Ensuring that our volunteers gain opportunities to learn new skills that, in turn, they can contribute back to their community.
- Preserving and sharing community memory, meaning that the history of the community is housed in a safe environment that will be preserved and shared for years to come.

I strongly believe that CRCs are beneficial to our communities; they play a major role in assisting in a breakdown of isolation and hold a lifelong driven attitude to the benefits of community development.

*Corinne Hobbs  
Member for  
South West Region*



◀ Bremer Bay CRC held a free community breakfast as part of a national Neighbourhood House Week celebration

# vital partnerships

If it takes a village to raise a child, then it takes many entities to create a community!

CRCs often partner with other organisations and groups – an average of 8 per month – for the successful delivery of projects and services. The most common partners are state government, other not-for-profit organisations, and local government<sup>6</sup>.

CRCs recognise the benefits of partnerships, including information sharing, mutual support, and the fostering of collaborative working relationships. They also recognise how critical partnerships are to delivering services in regional and remote WA.

Below is a small sample of successful partnerships CRCs have forged:

## Wyalkatchem Seniors Information

In November 2017, Wyalkatchem CRC, in partnership with Wyalkatchem Community Care Inc. hosted a *Seniors' Information* event for seniors and their families/carers. A large number of companies and organisations were invited to present information about their organisation and the services they can offer. Just a few of these organisations were: Avivo; Wheatbelt Ag Care; Services in the Bush; Silverchain; BaptistCare; WC Legal C; Share and Care; Carers WA; Regional Men's Health; Wyalkatchem Hospital; Eastern Wheatbelt Primary Health; Raj Local Chemist; Rotary; and Optometrist On Call.

## Celebrating life in the Bush in Nungarin

In May 2017, Nungarin CRC leveraged its strong local partnerships to deliver their *Celebrating Life in the Bush!* event. The event brought a fun day of learning, food, and entertainment to some of the most marginalised and isolated people into the community. Wheatbelt Agcare Counsellor Melanie Meier provided a thought provoking presentation on coping skills, managing stress and reducing isolation in rural areas. Participants then enjoyed a sumptuous lunch, which was followed by a comedy movie in the amazing military style theatre in the Nungarin Heritage Machinery & Army Museum.

## Making information available to the community

CRCs often distribute important agricultural initiatives, such as pest identification, on behalf of the state government.

Due to the trusted position of CRCs in the community, their wide reach, and their effective use of video conference technology, many NFP agencies, such as Wheatbelt Community Legal Centres and Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), seek to deliver services through the network with assistance from the peak body Linkwest.

## The top five CRC partnerships

1. Local Shires
2. Educational institutions (such as TAFE, schools and universities)
3. A variety of businesses
4. Community service organisations
5. Government agencies



## Movie event in Dumbleyung

Through their partnership with local businesses, Dumbleyung CRC was able to provide delicious nibbles to the 32 community members that attended their Movie Night, held as a part of Neighbourhood House Week in 2016.

◀ Thanks to the local CRC, members of the Dumbleyung community had the rare treat of a movie night, complete with delicious nibbles

# CRC partnership improves **teen health and wellbeing**

In 2016, The Boyup Brook CRC partnered with the Boyup Brook District High School (BBDHS) to deliver *Teen HEAL* a healthy lifestyle program to students in years 7-10.

The need for this project was identified through the school's business plan with student wellness a key priority area, as well as concerning attitudes of some students towards food. Teen HEAL (Healthy Eating Activity Lifestyle) is a national program devised by the Exercise and Sports Science Association of Australia, which CRC Manager, Jodi Nield is qualified to deliver.



The program ran for eight weeks with different topics discussed each session, including 'What is Healthy Eating', 'Food Labels', 'Planning Your Health' and also included ways to increase physical activity levels, even through day-to-day activities such as at lunchtime and household chores.

The success of the program in 2016 led to it being incorporated annually into the school calendar. The full program was delivered to the Year 7 class in 2017, with two refresher sessions for the Year 8-10 students who had already completed the program.

This collaborative project brought two organisations together in a mutually beneficial way. The CRC has been able to further develop its existing relationship with the school and connect with an important demographic in the community. The program was a proactive collaboration to make a difference in young lives, supported by the Boyup Brook Medical Practice. Small rural schools do not always have access to specialist external education programs, so it was beneficial to include the HEAL program into Health and Phys Ed classes to align with the curriculum.

The program has had a significant impact on the 80 students who have participated over the past two years. They have all been provided with consistent health messages, resources and healthy lifestyle measurement tools to use from teenagers into adulthood and throughout their lives.

The program has further enhanced the positive existing relationship between BBDHS and Boyup Brook CRC, with additional partnership activities continuing to be planned between the two organisations: Internet safety, science week, business activities, leadership, volunteering and youth programs.

# bridging the digital divide

There still exists a significant digital divide between regional and metro area. In 2016, a University of Canberra survey found that almost half of regional Australians rate their Internet coverage as “very poor”.

## Digital disadvantage coincides with other forms of social and economic disadvantage

Digital inclusion is not just about computers, the Internet or even technology. It is about using technology as a channel to improve skills, to enhance quality of life, to drive education and to promote economic wellbeing across all elements of society.

## Digital inclusion is really about social inclusion

The 2017 Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) report found that:

- **Mobile-only users are relatively less digitally included**  
Mobile-only use is linked with socioeconomic factors, with people in low income households (29.8%), those who are not employed (24.0%), and those with low levels of education (27.6%) more likely to be mobile-only. Despite the benefits of mobile Internet, this group is characterised by a relatively high degree of digital exclusion.”
- **People aged 65+ are Australia’s least digitally included** age group – this problem is magnified by the movement of many government services online.
- The ADII reveals **substantial differences between rural and urban areas**.  
In 2017, digital inclusion is 7.9 points higher in capital cities (58.6) than in country areas (50.7).



## CRCs: much more than just a smartphone

It is true that one of the on-going roles of CRCs is to provide access to, and support with, technology. People unfamiliar with regional and remote communities might believe this role to be outdated in the era of smartphones. This is not the case.

In regional and remote communities there are still a large number of people who:

- Require support to access government services
- Lack confidence with technology
- Are unable to afford Internet plans

CRCs, using their secure video conference platform, provide regional access to services that people in metropolitan areas take for granted. These services include health and employment workshops, access to courts, and much more.

CRCs that offer services on behalf of the Department of Human Services, provide one-on-one support to an average of 9 clients per week – mainly with accessing government websites and using technology<sup>11</sup>.



# From CRC Traineeship to Financial Advisor Of the Year

Past Nannup resident Eleanor Ross (nee Cook) was awarded the National Financial Advisor of the Year at the 2017 Women in Finance awards held in Sydney in September 2017.

Elle, pictured below at the awards ceremony, was the first Trainee at the Nannup Community Resource Centre (known then as the Nannup Telecentre) taking on the position in 2005 after completing year 12 at Busselton SHS.

Elle said, "I truly feel that the traineeship I completed at the Nannup Telecentre was a fantastic opportunity, and one that I thoroughly enjoyed. The traineeship allowed me to exercise my skills after completing Certificate 2 in Business and allowed me to attain Certificate 3 in Business on completion of the program. Beyond the traineeship, I worked in stockbroking for 6 years before recognising that I was passionate about financial planning and making it an industry that we can be proud of.

"The traineeship I completed at the Nannup Telecentre [CRC] was a fantastic opportunity, and one that I thoroughly enjoyed."

"I am thrilled to be recognised as the winner of the 2017 National Women in Finance, Financial Adviser of the Year award and to be nominated as a Finalist for the overall Excellence award on the evening. Being recognised on this level is extremely humbling. I am truly passionate about my career in the financial services industry and I look forward to continuing to be dedicated to my clients, to delivering quality advice and exceeding expectations."

Elle was the first of 14 Trainees to be employed at the Nannup Community Resource Centre over the past 12 years. The CRC Traineeship program is currently supported by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.



# Where to from here?

Community Resource Centres are strong, effective, and significant organisations that offer great value to regional and remote communities. Their potential, and the potential of the CRN network, is limited only by the imagination... and funding.

Using existing CRC infrastructure – social, physical and virtual – for the delivery of services and provision of information could represent big savings both for government and other agencies. To achieve this, greater investment in the CRN would be required, as well as more strategic utilisation of the network, including the development of policies and frameworks informing how to best integrate the network with broader service delivery.

A major review of the network, completed in 2016, concluded that – given the widespread recognition and utilisation of CRCs and the positive feedback from community and business users – the CRN program should be continued<sup>2</sup>.

It is important to remember that, regardless of what happens in the political sphere, CRCs are one of WA's more valued and valuable institutions. They have **comprehensively proven their significance**, and continue to do so everyday as they serve individuals, families, and communities in regional and remote WA.

Hands up for WA CRCs – at the heart of WA Communities!



# The Western Australian Community Resource Centre Network



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Linkwest is the Peak Body for Neighbourhood and  
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