

## Community Leadership

This Community Leadership website is the result of a partnership project between the Education and Research Unit of [Volunteering Queensland](#) and the School of Learning and Professional Studies (within the Faculty of Education) [Queensland University of Technology](#).

Development of the site was made possible through a [Queensland University of Technology](#) Community Services Grant received in 2002 and 2004.

### **Dulcie Bronsch – Case Study**

Dulcie Bronsch has been working at Kummara Association's *Stronger Indigenous Families Project* as a Community Development Worker since August 2004. Currently, Dulcie is working with inner-city Indigenous families and communities and with the homeless people in South Brisbane through a range of community-based projects. As an Aboriginal woman, Dulcie places great emphasis on understanding and respecting Aboriginal protocol. She believes that building trust and understanding is the most important characteristic of her work, and has devoted the past twenty years cultivating strong links with her community.

Dulcie began what she *now* identifies as community development work in the early 1990's when she was a Principal Consultant, contracted by the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to develop and implement a mobile dental service for seven communities in south-west regional Queensland. In this role, Dulcie networked with local organisations, community elders, tradespersons and officers from the public health system to provide the facilities necessary to deliver dental services in regional Queensland. Although at the time it was "*just what I did*" looking back now, Dulcie realises that community development work started for her more than a decade ago.

In her work with a diverse range of people involved in these community based projects, Dulcie strongly believes in engaging participants through most stages of the process, so they have a sense of ownership over both the process and the outcomes. She encourages them to participate in the initial consultations, then devises and develops a plan which is then taken back to the participants for consultation and then approval. As she said, "*It's the way I work*".

When asked about her most rewarding work – besides the current work in regional Queensland, Dulcie identifies the '*Footprints Along Kurilpa*' project. It engaged the local homeless community in assisting designers create park furniture concepts using Kurilpa Park (their local dwelling) as the premise for the project. Professionals such as a landscape architect, visual artist and video team worked beside homeless participants to design furniture concepts that would better suit their needs and '*fit-in*' with the natural surrounds of the park. The end product will be a booklet of the design concepts of park furniture. Another key component of the Footprints project is the making of a DVD with an oral history, compiled of stories and interviews from members of the Homeless People's Association at Kurilpa Park. Dulcie engaged a former outreach worker to conduct the interviews, as he was known and respected by the homeless community.

While the booklet will be submitted to the Brisbane City Council for its consideration in the current upgrades of Council parks and public spaces, it was the process that was most rewarding and memorable for Dulcie - from the initial barbeque in the park with the homeless mob and project workers, to their inclusion and suggestions when designing the models. In projects like these, having the right people for the right job is really important, and Dulcie handpicks workers for each project to ensure their values and motivations are best suited to the project.

The daily challenge of her job motivates Dulcie, making “*each day being a new day*”. However, she says the biggest challenges in her role are advocacy to voice fundamentals to local government for social change. She said, “*it’s hard for a little person like me to change government policy*”. Her strategy for addressing this is to create a network within the community and government, “finding people who support your foundation” who have the power to influence decision-making.

Dulcie regards the processes she uses to work with people rather than the actual outcome as having the biggest impact, being able to engage the “*most disadvantaged groups in society*” in meaningful ways. The processes, the affiliation with the local community and project outcomes attracted relationships and collaboration with the local council, agencies and other funding opportunities.

Dulcie is quick to point out that she doesn’t feel comfortable with the term ‘community leader’ as she has always worked in her community and sees herself as playing a small part in improving living conditions for disadvantaged people. On a personal level, Dulcie is inspired by her community elders rather than those merely labelled leaders. As she said, “*they have to belong to me*”. She does, however, recognise Kummara as a leading community organisation, as it is well respected by the Indigenous families and the homeless community, local Members of Parliament and the Brisbane City Council, who respect the “*open door and transparent*” approach they take to their work.

Dulcie believes that the following criteria are important to her work:

- *Listening to people and not just going in and dictating to them; providing a ‘sympathetic ear’ - be patient*
- Always respect Indigenous elders and protocols
- Building trust as change cannot occur without it
- Networking – it is important to have connections in local and state government who understand and support the work you do
- Collaborations and partnerships - community organisations are more effective in partnerships - sometimes it’s hard to engage with community organisations and agencies, for one reason or another
- Lastly, keep it simple – simple is good