

Community engagement

Engaging at UQ's Boilerhouse

Established in 1999 as part of the new Ipswich campus of The University of Queensland, the UQ Boilerhouse Community Engagement Centre aims to find ways for the university and public to work together. To achieve this, the Centre works with a range of diverse stakeholders from the private, public and community sectors, developing informed and collaborative responses to both existing and emerging community issues.

Why do we want collaborative responses? It has been argued that no single entity can deal effectively with the complexity of issues confronting modern society. Limited knowledge, time and resources restrict any one organisation in its efforts to build a just and sustainable society. Collaboration opens up possibilities for innovation and shared responsibility.

As with any engagement practice, obstacles arise making the process more challenging. These include establishing a common language, over-researched communities and a lack of motivation to participate in a collaborative partnership. The effects of such impediments can hinder the benefits of engagement that include community capacity building and sustainability. The Centre utilises 'best practice' frameworks, follows engagement principles, develops personal relationships as a basis for collaboration, encourages active citizenship and uses an action research approach, incorporating a focus on capacity building for participants

in a way to overcome these hurdles. As such the Centre has a reputation for innovative and diverse approaches to community engagement.

Over time, the UQ Boilerhouse has built its research profile, developed community teaching programs and been involved in many successful and varied projects. Under the leadership of Director, Associate Professor Michael Cuthill, the UQ Boilerhouse has entered an exciting new phase of operation, exploring creative ways to bring people together.

"With the strong growth expected in the West Moreton region" says Associate Professor Cuthill, "the UQ Boilerhouse can contribute to the development of just and sustainable outcomes for the community in areas such as social equity, health and wellbeing and environmental protection."

The Centre has 15 part and full time staff working on 17 projects with funding in excess of \$2 million.

The Centre is focused on four key objectives. These include: facilitating positive community outcomes with an emphasis on the West Moreton region, providing a high-profile example of UQ commitment to higher education community engagement, ensuring all Centre activities are transparent and accountable and finally, developing a positive, stable and collaborative work environment.

Description of projects can be found at <http://www.uq.edu.au/boilerhouse>

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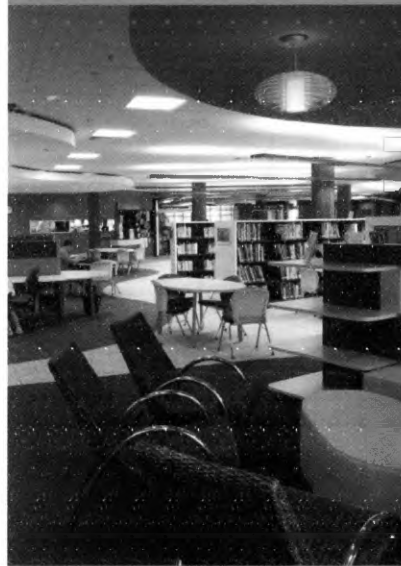
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