

## In-focus special on place-based issues and approaches

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### Foreword

This 'in focus' edition of JOSI was inspired by the first *Changefest*, a gathering of diverse peoples intent on making a change within their communities (in Australia). Hosted by Logan Together, Collaboration for Impact, Opportunity Child and Griffith University in the city of Logan 2018, this event was born from a shared belief in the power of bringing together local people with the institutions that serve them to collectively take ownership of a problem, shared priorities and to tackle local issues using local knowledge and experience to create long term positive change.

Griffith's Logan Campus, as a key anchor institution within Logan, has long been committed to working with the community to create a socially inclusive, innovative and prosperous region. Our role in assisting with the formation of Logan Together, a collective impact project aimed at improving outcomes for children in Logan, is one such example of this commitment. Logan Together is a mature collective impact project funded and supported by the Federal, State and Local government, community organisations and philanthropy, with in-kind support from the University. Its goal is to close the gap in early childhood development so that, by the age of eight, Logan children will be as healthy as any other group of Australian children. It was born from a recognition that place is a key determinant of entrenched social disadvantage and it seeks, through collective impact (Kania & Kramer 2011), to disrupt disadvantage.

In taking up the role as Head of Logan campus in 2018 I became immersed in the Logan community – its opportunities and its challenges – and passionate about strengthening the role that university could play as a truly civic university (UPP 2019). This role is multi-faceted: from educator and research translator through to more broadly contributing to social and economic uplift. It found me chairing a committee formed from local government and community organisations to plan a series of events to celebrate the cultural diversity of the Logan community as a strength – building deeper understanding and social cohesion - and promoting the value of the University as a major contributor to the economic and social wellbeing of Logan. Universities, along with hospitals and other large public sector organisations have sizeable assets that can be used to support local wealth building and development in a variety of ways. See for example the work being undertaken in Preston (Manley & Froggett 2016).

The current global pandemic has placed a renewed focus on the critical role of research in solving complex problems and the need for effective and timely translation of research into practise. It has also highlighted the role of community, on how we can respond to the challenges in a particular location in ways responsive to the unique demographic and spatial dynamics of place.

*Changefest* was conceived as a national event designed to provide an opportunity to bring together researchers, policy makers, community organisations and community members to build a shared understanding of the power of place-based collective impact. I saw the opportunity to strengthen our ability to bring together the strengths of different "ways of knowing" and of improving research and our ability to translate research into practise. The event provided rich opportunities for information sharing and for challenging and thought provoking conversations...and for fun! Several of the papers presented at our inaugural event form part of this 'in focus' feature.

The Logan Changefest has left a lasting legacy – strengthening the sense of community in Logan, most visibly through the formation of Warril Yari-Go, a powerful and respected leadership group of Aboriginal Elders and leaders from across the Logan community that helps set the agenda for the Logan Together movement. Recently the Dusseldorp Forum compiled a set of real-time examples of place-based approaches that are enabling community driven resilience and response during the COVID-19 crisis. Logan Together is included as one such example (Dusseldorp 2020).

Since the inaugural Changefest a second event has been held in Mt Druitt and a third is planned for Darwin in 2021. Such events provide a great opportunity to contribute to, and learn from, other researchers, practitioners, policy makers, community organisations and community members. Through our collective impact we can contribute to long term positive change within our communities, breaking cycles of disadvantage and building socially inclusive and prosperous

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## **References**

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