Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan
Activity Update
August 2023

The Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan

Gladstone Region engaging in action Together (GRT) is a community-led, place-based social change initiative with the vision of

opportunity, equity and quality of life for everyone in our community

Foundation Assumption

Children born into happy, safe homes, with happy, healthy parents, are statistically more likely to have a happy and healthy life with access to employment and education opportunities.

Outcomes

- Our families have access to life's basics, feel independent and have purpose
- Our children feel safe, happy and loved, growing up at home with their families
- Our children are starting school ready to learn and on track to thrive

In order to achieve these outcomes, these essentials have been identified by our community as priorities:

- our families have access to housing
- our families have access to employment
- we are connected to self-identity, culture and community
- our parents have parenting confidence and healthy lifestyles
- our children have a healthy start to life
- our children have quality early educational support
- our parents have access to supports

Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan

In 2022, the Gladstone Region Community endorsed the Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan, as reflective of the issues, impacts and solutions that they had identified and voiced over a two-year period.

This report provides an update on activity being undertaken against identified actions in the Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan.

While the establishment phase of Gladstone Region engaging in action Together (GRT), as a collective impact initiative, is only just being completed, a large number of community have been actively working on initiatives of the Action Plan, each at various stages of project development and delivery. This report aims to provide a transparent capture of the stages of these projects and invites participation from all interested stakeholders in progressing the initiatives to achieve the collective vision and outcomes outlined above.

Community conversations continue to support identification and understanding of local social issues and service needs on an ongoing basis through community engagements, in place.

To learn more about the community-designed strategy and structure that guides the work of GRT, in a collective impact approach, please see the Collective Impact section at the end of this report or visit the strategy page of the GRT website.

Community includes everyone who lives, participates, impacts on, or is impacted by, activity in the Gladstone Region.

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Our Families Have Access to Housing

Housing Round Table

During 2022 a Growth Management Working Group of stakeholders across government and industry met to identify core elements required to tackle impacts on the Gladstone Region community related to growth.

Discussions considered, *who has the authority to play in this space*? With an outcome that, locals who had experienced previous growth events, would be best informed to identify continuous improvements and that local knowledge and experience, could be shared with others seeking to contribute to positive impacts of growth.

The group agreed that inaction was the most likely factor that would inevitably lead to history repeating itself. To avoid competing interests and lagging or reactive impact management strategies, a local, shared position and strategy on effective growth mitigations needed to be proactively agreed.

Working Group members identified what local knowledge would be needed to inform the decisions of 'experts' as early preparation for the new wave of growth emerged.

The group developed a methodology to progress the work that included: quantifying impacts that aggravated the social impacts of the boom-and-bust cycle; developing a collective understanding of causal factors that led to declining community wellbeing in previous growth cycles; understanding previous mitigations that worked and what could be improved on; addressing community concerns through a shared narrative; and co-design of possible solutions.

Elements of the work included: projecting the growth anticipated; identifying and understanding existing planning works across various cross-sector stakeholders; and identifying current capacity and pressures to understand the context within which the impacts might play out differently to the past.

As a result of the Working Group's efforts, data requests are being supported by Government partners, designed to help quantify previous growth, to enable more informed, community-led decisions and participation in future growth planning.

Commonwealth Government (welfare and migration) and Queensland Government (social trends) data has already enabled deeper analysis of the causes of previous social change events, where demographic shifts were identified. Data that has traditionally been challenging to access, has been a significant enabler for the Gladstone community to identify the questions that need to be considered and answered by community, to create the future they want.

Data is being collated in a Housing Issues Brief which will help inform the work of a Housing Round Table in 2023.

Our Families Have Access to Employment

Training Pathways to Employment

Employment providers are identifying where increased opportunities can be provided to support those parents finding it challenging to enter the workforce. Feedback will support the development of initiatives with providers and other stakeholders to improve pathways to training and employment opportunities for parents.

Collaborative efforts to streamline training pipelines and increase access to work ready programs are in development, including promotion of client outcomes resulting from existing underutilised supports.

The complexity of circumstances impacting families who are dependent on welfare, has identified debt reduction as a significant enabler to improved wellbeing, and increased access to employment pathway opportunities. One source of debt accrual is fines and penalties collected by the State Penalty Enforcement Register (SPER).

An opportunity emerging from a Local Level Alliance meeting, is the Hardship Partners Program, which provides individuals experiencing hardship, realistic options to resolve their SPER debt. Individuals can reduce their SPER debt by doing approved unpaid work or relevant courses, counselling or treatments. The hours spent undertaking approved activities translate into a specific dollar value of SPER debt reduction. Participation requires the support of an approved sponsor or Hardship Partner.

There are a currently a small number of Hardship Partners in the Gladstone Region able to offer this option. Data provided by SPER will support the identification of potential opportunities to widen the pool of local Hardship Partners. Widening the pool of appropriate partners is aimed at increasing opportunities for parents to engage in beneficial supports or meaningful activity, that could support their pathway to employment and their connection to community, while reducing their debts.

We are Connected to Self-Identity, Culture and Community

ChangeFest23

ChangeFest is a national movement for place-based change and a gathering for indigenous and non-indigenous community members celebrating and learning from communities, collaborators and changemakers leading change at the local, regional and national system levels. The event acknowledges that everybody is needed at the table to make change.

Gladstone representatives attending Changefest23 sought to learn from other initiatives and increase understanding of barriers and difficulties faced by First Nations people. The sharing experience promoted a sense of inspiration that change is possible, grew confidence to have a voice and to make decisions, shared feelings of pride in living in Gladstone, and grew capacity to create outcomes through collective skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to lead change.

First Nations Working Group

The First Nations Working Group are developing a project to celebrate the transition from school for local high school leavers through a Rites of Passage Ceremony. Based on a previously successful, smaller scale event, the ceremony would invite all school leavers to participate together and would demonstrate the support of community for our young people as they grow into their next chapter of adulthood, connecting them to community, culture and place.

Our Parents Have Parenting Confidence and Healthy Lifestyles

Evidence-based parenting support programs have experienced fluctuating periods of high demand, at times beyond capacity of local providers, identifying the need for increased provision. These programs receive positive feedback from participants and positive observations for client outcomes from practitioners, promoting desire to increase supply to meet demand.

To ensure that efforts to scale up this service provision creates the best possible outcomes for families, partnerships are being created to explore the optimisation of outcomes through data assessment and longer-term evaluation of outcomes.

Data partnerships with service providers delivering Parenting Support programs and support programs for Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs (MHAODs) and Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) will enable enhanced data collection across service provision, client outcomes, and waitlists for continuous improvements.

Further work is being explored to better understand the longitudinal outcomes for families engaging in parenting support programs, to understand how sustainable the benefits of programs are in creating improved outcomes for families. Partners in this potential work include local service providers and university researchers.

The aim of the projects will be to assess the availability, participation equity and effectiveness of programs to meet the objectives they are designed for, and create lasting outcomes for families, ensuring that parents have access to the right support at the right time.

Our Children Have a Healthy Start to Life and Quality Early Educational Support

Maternal Health

Following the success of Maternity Hubs in other locations, in increasing outcomes for mothers and babies, a desktop study is being undertaken to assess whether this solution could have similar positive impacts for families in the Gladstone Region. Demographics and perinatal data will be compared to locations offering Maternity Hubs, for consideration of the differences and similarities, to identify where design elements may be universally effective if applied in the same approach, or where place-based differences may require a different approach within the Gladstone Region.

With the release of the Gladstone Region Wellbeing Data Report (2023), timeseries data is being utilised to identify and understand trends in baby health and pregnant mother health.

Early Childhood Development

Following a need identified by Educators for more efficient referral pathway information to support families reaching out for support through existing relationships of trust, GRT partnered with GROW to support the delivery of resources for parents in the form of a referrals pathways guide. Educators came together in November 2021 to grow their referrals pathway knowledge and identified further referral pathway supports that would improve outcomes for families and children seeking supports through the school community. Integrated Service System tools and resources will continue to support these outcomes.

A partnership with Communities for Children, Act for Kids and the Local Level Alliance associated with Child Protection Week will target education and awareness activities promoting protective factors in families that enable child wellbeing, to reach our most vulnerable families. Data partnerships being developed will also assist to identify improvement opportunities.

Readiness for School - Child Assessments

Service capacity for early assessment of children has been unable to meet growing local demand for some time, with significant wait times experienced by parents and educators. Consequences include some children transitioning to school with unmet support needs, impacting on their capacity to thrive in the early years of school, or escalating circumstances for the child and family, impacting on wellbeing.

Some solutions have been implemented, with varying levels of success, including virtual assessments delivered via government funded programs in early childhood education and care (ECEC) provider settings, such as Child Care Centers and Kindergartens.

Limitations to existing solutions have been identified, including, in the case of virtual assessments via ECEC's, the limited capacity of ECEC's to release a staff member to be present for an assessment with a child and family, due to the staffing shortages and the ratio requirements for remaining children at the centre.

Some work arounds to long wait times for assessments have been shared, including historical examples, to provide increased supports to educators working with children prior to assessment outcomes. The restricting factor in each case is skills shortages. Continued work will bring together practitioners to understand the best application of solutions to apply for both immediate and longer-term sustainable outcomes.

A longitudinal study is being considered to track the outcomes of children and families through a range of solutions to understand where the best developmental outcomes and readiness for school is achieved.

Understanding is also being developed in relation to the increasing number of children being identified as, requiring further assessment, in their prep year in AEDC data.

Our Parents Have Access to Supports

Equitable Participation

Community access to services and supports has been a key theme of GRT engagement activity in 2023 with community conversations and a survey focused on what services individuals are accessing and what services, that could provide support, aren't accessed and why.

Work will continue to understand participation and access to supports, which together with service presentation, attendance, and waitlist data, will help to build a deeper understanding of barriers to accessing support, to ensure that services are reaching the community members they are designed to support.

Voice of Resilience

The challenge of Gladstone's 'hidden disadvantage' was identified by community and reported in the Gladstone Region Wellbeing Journey Story to 2021. A resulting community-identified action in the Action Plan was to grow community awareness of lived experience to enable understanding and support of disadvantaged families.

GRT partnered with Photopia Studio in the Voice of Resilience Project to reduce stigma surrounding disadvantage and encourage individuals and families facing adversity to seek early supports.

Through the project locals are giving back to community by sharing their most inspiring and vulnerable stories of life. Each tell their own unique story of resilience in their own words, complemented by visual storytelling by local photographic artist, William Debois in a photo novella format.

Stories include childhood experiences of homelessness, family separation, mental health, neglect, drug addiction, disability and racial discrimination, as context to hardships experienced, and the resulting values, drivers and wishes of each of the individuals sharing their stories.

William's participation in the project is supported by Gladstone Regional Council (GRC) and Arts Queensland's, Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF), bringing the arts and community together in the shared agenda for social change.

Integrated Service System

Huge growth occurred in our human service sector over a 5-7 year period, due to increased demand relating to migration into the region, and changes in system structures, including with the introduction on the NDIS.

Gaps emerging in referral pathway efficiencies were identified by community as priority improvement areas for inclusion in the Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan, with an agreed approach of starting by optimising the assets and strengths already existing in the service system.

Workshops in 2021 and 2022 identified key focus areas as:

- Referral Pathways
- Early Intervention – Case Management
- Coordinated Case Management for Complex Cases
- Integrated Service System – Tools and Resources including improved access to service information

Two working groups met regularly in 2022 and morphed into one Integrated Service System Working Group in 2023.

## Integrated Service System – Tools and Resources

Cross-sector stakeholders identified and mapped practical supports that would increase effectiveness and timeliness of service provision through effective referrals that deliver the right service at the right time for families. Resources included:

- Service Sector Map
- Referral Pathway Guides – (inaugural Referral Pathways Guide - Housing)
- the Referral Pathways Optimisation Toolkit
- the Coordinated Case Management Toolkit

Early indication of outcomes already experienced as a result of this work, include increased visibility of sector providers. At least two sector identified service gaps have lead to the identification of lesser-known services that offered appropriate programs and capacity to support clients. In these cases clients were referred to required supports, that were previously unknown to the referrer, enabling clients to receive the supports they needed, where otherwise they may not have.

Social Services Sector Map
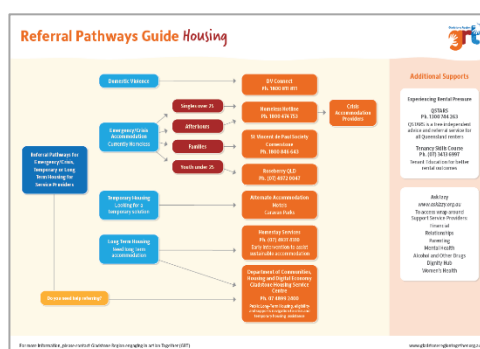
Referral Pathways Guide - Housing

Continued work in providing practitioners with the tools they have identified as essential to enable effective referrals for clients include:

- Program Mapping (development of a program directory)
- Referral Pathway Guides – for Youth and NDIS referrals
- Referral Pathways Optimisation Toolkit rollout – for referrals pathways data collection that can help identify continuous improvement opportunities

Further exploration will occur with sector stakeholders interested in growing a single intake process to reduce pressure on clients to repeat their story multiple times.

Service providers can contribute to optimising the system, enabling us to do more with what we have, by becoming data partners to contribute to whole of system visibility of client outcomes, service gaps and opportunities for improvements.

The growth in demand and stretched capacity of the human service sector also resulted in practitioner burnout, turnover and reduced retention.

A consistent concern within sector, is the disruption to continuation of care or referrals that rely on local knowledge and relationships. To mitigate risks related to turnover in roles the suggestion of a '*Gladstone Service System Induction*' is being floated to support new practitioners or services to the region quickly navigate services and referrals and feel connected.

The induction would link new practitioners to resources and service system navigation tools and establish the 'way we work together' to grow and maintain a culture of collaboration and service system integration.

Integrated Service System - Training and Capacity Building

The Gladstone Region, like many regional areas, experiences exacerbated skills shortages compared to metropolitan areas, compounded by costs to upskill employee's due to limited access to quality specialist training providers outside of the Southeast Corner.

The inequity for regional organisations in access to training consequently becomes an inequity for our community, with reduced access to quality and timely supports. This is being evidenced through client disengagement, waitlists and extended or recurrent need for supports.

Constrained training budgets within funded programs, combined with costs of training including travel and accommodation, make unit costs inaccessible for providers, who have to prioritise required competencies to maintain licencing.

A collective buying power project has been developed, with sector support for a sector collaborative funding application, to help bridge and assess the gap, between allocations for training in service provision funding and the level of skills available due to skills shortages in the region.

To test the potential for success of this model, GRT enabled Trauma Informed Training in 2022 as an identified priority need of sector. 42 sector stakeholders participated and post event tracking of practitioner and client outcomes returned positive feedback.

Integrated Service System - Shared Practice and Narrative

Training together provides an opportunity to grow shared language and practices that enable service sector integration. A continuous conversation with sector identifying what exists and where gaps are in shared practice across education, health and social services, has identified opportunities for collective training to grow shared practices.

A small number of local stakeholders were invited to test The Common Approach training, and assessed it to be of value in our local context, to provide practitioners with a shared language and approach to assessment, referral and support of clients.

The Common Approach is supported by a suite of resources that facilitates conversations with families by providing prompts and guidance for practitioners, and can provide practitioners and organisations with new ways of building relationships with families for a more holistic understanding of the family's strengths and needs.

Practitioners providing supports to families and children in the Gladstone Region will be provided with an opportunity to undertake The Common Approach training.

Skills Attraction & Retention

In 2022 the impact of skills shortages was featuring on the agenda of multiple leadership networks throughout the region including the Gladstone's Senior Officers Network of Government, the Economic Development Practitioner Network led by Gladstone Regional Council (GRC), and the Gladstone Interagency Meeting.

Skills Attraction was identified as a key inclusion in the Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan and also featured in the Gladstone Health Plan.

In 2022 skills shortages were impacting every sector supporting our community, including social, education and health and was identified as having a significant impact on the quality and timeliness of supports for our families and children.

Beyond the human service sector, skills shortages were impacting cross-sector employers across the region and in March 2022 GRT facilitated a workshop of interested stakeholders across government, business and industry to identify immediate actions that could be taken to support skills attraction efforts. A further workshop, facilitated by KPMG in July last year, widened the stakeholder pool, to develop a collective view of what was needed to reduce the impacts of skills shortages in the region.

At the time, searches about moving to, and living and working in Gladstone were not promoting Gladstone's point of difference as an attractive place to relocate for work, as effectively as they could.

In response, a suite of resources was developed by a collective of regional organisations to help recruitment efforts of local employers in attracting skilled workers and their families to the Gladstone Region.

Gladstone Regional Council (GRC), Gladstone Area Promotion and Development Limited (GAPDL), Gladstone Engineering Alliance (GEA), Gladstone Chamber of Commerce & Industry (GCCI) and Gladstone Region engaging in action Together (GRT), partnered to improve the visibility of the Gladstone Region as an attractive place to relocate for work.

The 'Glad to be in Gladstone' webpage on the Gladstone Regional Council website streamlines access to information for people looking to move to the Gladstone Region. The webpage includes case study videos of new and existing Gladstone residents whose stories promote the liveability and point of difference of the region, job opportunities for partners and training and employment pathways for family members.

To support employers leverage the resources, a 'Gladstone Region Skills Attraction Employers Toolkit' has been released, suited to small to medium employers, including human service sector employers, providing easy-to-follow steps to use the online resources in their own recruitment efforts to attract new skilled employees from outside the region. This resource aims to support local employers across sectors through their own recruitment efforts in a consistent and shared narrative approach.

This collective 'campaign' approach to attract skilled employees to the region, leverages the existing efforts of employers to attract employees, by adding new consistent shared narrative that will contribute to a collective campaign to help grow our local capacity.

The tools were launched in July through a collaborative promotion of all partners and a measurement methodology has been co-designed to support track effectiveness of the campaign to overcome local skills shortages. Feedback from local employers and new employees to the region is encouraged through surveys attached to the campaign, which also invite suggestions for continuous improvement and further actions.

The increased visibility of the Gladstone Region as an attractive place to live, resulting from access to the online resources, is already yielding more positive results in online searches related to moving to Gladstone.

Measurement

Community are co-designing the Gladstone Region Wellbeing Measurement Framework. Measures identified by community over a three-year period have been collated and are being tested as a measurement set with community for endorsement. The Measurement Framework is a part of the overall Understanding, Measurement and Evaluation Framework (UMEL) and include predominately population level wellbeing indicators that require long-term change before outcomes are recorded.

The measures are those identified by community as indicators of success in achieving priority focus areas in the GRT Theory of Change (listed as Outcomes at the start of this Activity Update).

These measures will demonstrate the value of the collective investment of all stakeholders working together to achieve these outcomes, including: government partners; industry and business partners; participating organisations; and community members sharing their lived experience.

They will ensure the integrity, accountability and success of the Stronger Places, Stronger People investment in the Gladstone Region by measuring and sharing outcomes of GRT transparently with all stakeholders.

The Gladstone Region Wellbeing Data Hub

The Gladstone Region Wellbeing Data Hub has been developed to include community-identified data and data aligned to the Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan.

Further data requests have been submitted to Government partners in response to community requests. Data requests include data to understand and identify social impacts and to monitor change.

Stakeholder report using the Data Hub for understanding of local issues and evidence of need in funding submissions.
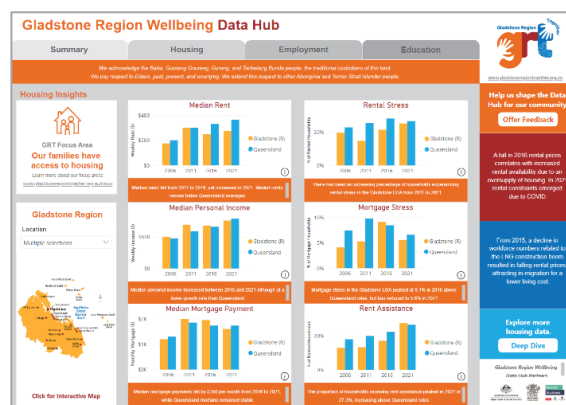
Data Capacity Building

Data partners are working with GRT to grow their data collection and capacity to increase informed decision making and data informed identification of continuous improvement opportunities. Partners are supported in the identification of data, design of collection tools, embedding of collection processes, visualisation of data for trends, interpretation, understanding and enabling data evidenced decision making service delivery improvements.

Appetite to share data is increasing with local stakeholders actively seeking opportunity to share data collected with GRT and to overcome sharing barriers within large organisations or departments.

Evidence Informed Decision-Making

GRT have partnered with Restacking the Odds (RSTO) in aligned objectives of the RSTO initiative and the interests of the Gladstone Region community.

The partnership aims to enable equitable access for children and families to the right high-quality, evidence-informed services, at the right time, through data informed identification of improvement opportunity.

The initiative aims to improve our understanding of the performance of our early years services and enable rapid deployment of solutions to address identified needs. The work of RSTO focuses on answering key questions related to: Quantity (are sufficient services available?); Quality (are we delivering high-quality services?); and Participation (Who is accessing our services?).

In partnership, GRT and RSTO have funded a role to further develop the capacity of local partners in the focus areas of: antenatal care; sustained nurse home visiting; early childhood education and care, and; targeted parenting programs

The Future

The Australian budget announcement in May, secured the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative for an additional five years to end June 2029.

This announcement recognises the value of community-led, place-based collective impact, and is a result of collective efforts across many communities including the Gladstone Region and a credit to the whole of community investment made through participation, shared lived-experience and local expertise.

Shared Decision-Making

As one of the six SPSP demonstration communities invited to participate in Shared Decision-Making, Gladstone now also has an opportunity to shape the national agenda on the shared decision-making processes, practices and culture of governments and communities.

Local leaders and managers of local government and non-government human service sector departments and organisations, and other interested stakeholders, are invited to participate in the process to identify key priorities that would benefit from this level of collaboration and shared accountability in changing the current landscape.

Systems Leadership

In 2022 four local leaders completed a Systems Leadership Program held as a residential interstate over two individual weeks of the year. A further four Gladstone leaders will participate in 2023 to continue growing authority in systems leadership.

Local participants in the Program represent service providers across, Parenting Supports, Foster Care, Family and Youth Services, Education, State Government, Local Government and GRT Leadership Group and First Nations Working Group.

Further opportunities to grow capacity in systems leadership will enable whole of community participation.

Gladstone Region Social Plan

Part of this planning includes the response of GRT to community request to develop a Gladstone Region Social Plan, with scope beyond GRT's remit. The intention of the social plan is to make visible gaps, barriers and opportunities for improved wellbeing across the region, to reduce circular discussion on hot topics and instead funnel energy into ownership of change elements. The plan would include elements intentionally excluded from GRT's Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan which is limited to GRT deliverables. Critical but excluded items include Childcare, Aged Care, and Transport.

The social plan will be designed to align to the existing Gladstone Health Plan (CQ Rural Health/PHN funded 2022) and planned Gladstone Regional Council Social Infrastructure Plan (2024).

The local aim is to develop funding ready projects where needed, or do more with what is available where possible to overcome challenges and reduce feelings of 'disempowerment' where a need is experienced over a long period, with no nominated owner to lead the development and deliver of solutions. Different stakeholders will be asked to nominate for ownership of each item identified in the Social Plan.

Investment Ready Projects

The community identified Gladstone Region Social Plan would enable collaboration around key agreed priorities that could then be developed into project plans with sufficient data informed evidence of need and community endorsement to:

- support funding proposals to fill resourcing gaps
- provide business case and return on investment justification for investment
- inform resource allocations through shared-decision making processes
- support policy or systems change

GRT is able to resource this work for family and child outcomes that provide sustainable equitable opportunity.

Gladstone Region Wellbeing – a Collective Impact Approach

In 2019 the Australian Government and Queensland Government invited the Gladstone Region Community to partner as a Stronger Places, Stronger People demonstration community, to improve outcomes for our families and children. In June 2021 the Gladstone Region Community accepted the invitation and committed to working together in a collective impact approach.

Collective Impact is a framework for addressing complex social problems that involve multiple stakeholders from different sectors. This approach emphasises the importance of collaboration, shared measurement, and a common agenda. It involves bringing together diverse stakeholders to work towards a common goal, sharing accountability for decision-making, and using data to track progress and adjust.

The goal of Collective Impact is to achieve significant and sustainable social change by leveraging the strengths and resources of all stakeholders involved.

The Collective Impact Model includes five key ingredients:

1. continuous communication (to enable a community-led approach based on trust and relationship)

2. a Backbone Team (to resource the work)

3. a shared agenda **Vision (and Theory of Change)**

– the vision for the work was designed by community in 2021 and included in a partnership proposal to government in June 2021 along with the Gladstone Region Wellbeing Journey Story to 2021 and the Gladstone Region Wellbeing Baseline Data Report 2021 (updated with addendums in August 2023)
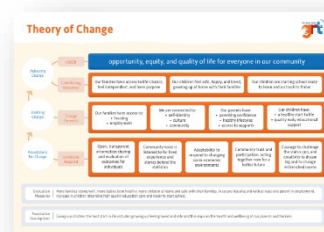
4. a shared action plan (mutually reinforcing activity) **Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan**

– the Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan was endorsed by community in 2022

The first *Gladstone Region Wellbeing Action Plan – Activity Update* was released 17 August 2023

5. shared measurement **Gladstone Region Wellbeing Measurement Framework**

– measures included in the DRAFT Gladstone Region Wellbeing Measurement Framework (released 16 August 2023 for feedback), have been in development by community over the last three years through workshops and public events discussing and dissecting data in light of local experience.

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