The Exchange at Kelvin Grove

An Overview – October 2011
The Exchange

Kelvin Grove Urban Village is a joint initiative of the Queensland Government, through the Department of Communities and Queensland University of Technology. The $1 billion committed to the site has delivered infrastructure, commercial, educational and recreational facilities that are setting new benchmarks for inner urban development. The Kelvin Grove Urban Village is a master-planned community that demonstrates best practice in sustainable, mixed-use urban development and community engagement. The Hornery Institute was commissioned to develop an integrated master plan incorporating strategies to achieve place making, community and cultural development, economic and social sustainability outcomes.

The partners provided Community Development funding to establish a community hub in the new Kelvin Grove Urban Village, supporting their vision of creating a place with a distinct identity and a strong sense of community. Initial funding in 2009, achieved through a competitive tendering process, resource Communify Qld to work with the various stakeholders living, working and studying within the Kelvin Grove region. The focus was to build a self-reliant community, increase ownership and utilisation of facilities and civic spaces, improve community awareness and confidence, provide opportunity for community engagement and participation, and enhance the well-being of residents, workers, students and business owners. Communify has worked to achieve this through developing service responses and activities to promote social well-being, facilitating community and stakeholder engagement, place activation, providing opportunities for relationship building and the development of social networks.

Communify began working in April 2009, engaging a part-time community development worker to undertake an audit of what opportunities currently existed within the Village and to begin discussions with community members to look at activities and projects of interest. In June 2009, our community hub in Blamey Street, the Exchange opened with an official launch attended by over 300 guests.

The Exchange commenced with a primary focus on providing opportunities for people to participate in activities that would promote their health and well-being and that would encourage community engagement by supporting people to overcome social isolation. A number of these activities are highlighted in this report and have continued over the life of the centre to be well attended and in some cases self-managed by participants. At the Exchange we have supported the local community to identify areas of interest and service need and made a commitment to provide opportunities and to facilitate groups initiated or suggested by the community. With an average of 736 people accessing Exchange services each month, the centre has developed fully into a vibrant, busy hub in the heart of Kelvin Grove Urban Village. The Exchange has been a place for people to come together, to engage in meaningful activities, to access computers and to get assistance to access support services, information and referrals.

The use of this centre and the engagement of the community in the broad range of activities and services has been beyond our initial expectations. From this small shop front centre, people have made friends and social connections (for some the first time in the lives of some), learnt new skills, maintained tenancies, learnt to budget and manage finances, participated in parenting workshops, joined self-help and facilitated groups to manage health and behavioural issues and developed cross-cultural relationships through language exchange, The Exchange has become a vibrant community hub integral to this community. A broad range of programs for children including a homework club, Urban Break Out and multicultural playgroups has facilitated the families of international students with language and cultural awareness. In a dense, inner-city village such as Kelvin Grove, a centre like The Exchange is vital, and particularly important due to the diverse mix, needs and demographic composition of its community members. Prior to the opening of this centre, Kelvin Grove had developed a reputation for issues that impact on the residents and surrounding communities. We feel strongly that we were tasked to develop a community hub to support this new, emerging and multi-cultural community and to that end, we have delivered beyond the scope of the original brief. The Exchange is a credit to this community and its supporters and deserves an ongoing commitment to continue. Communify, from the very beginning stated that if we were to begin this work that we would be here for the long-term. It is unacceptable to move into a community, generate interest and activity, raise expectations and then to simply walk away. We implore the various stakeholders, particularly the State Government and QUT to commit to continuing support for The Exchange.

We began with a primary focus on providing opportunities for people to participate in activities that promoted their health and well-being and to encourage community engagement to support people to overcome social isolation.
Let’s Get Talking Kelvin Grove

This project links people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds with local English speakers. Families/students arriving in Brisbane often experience considerable stress while making a new home, adjusting to studies, and adjusting to or finding new work with no local contacts or family support. This volunteer buddy program links new arrivals with local people and makes a significant difference to the stress experienced, feelings of belonging and settlement. Around 50 new arrivals, including students, are given opportunities to link with local residents for social interaction, orientation to the area and to exchange hospitality and language.

Beginners English Class for Women

The Exchange becomes a ‘women’s only space’ to enable women of all cultures to attend this weekly class. Many of the students are the wives of international students from QUT, UQ and Griffith University. Once a month the class is held in a kitchen to enable women to learn English while cooking together and sharing food. Between 10 and 20 women attend the class and childcare is provided by volunteers. Run by volunteer TESOL teachers, classes are fun, friendly and have included surprise parties, excursions and lamington making sessions.

Written & Spoken Academic English

This is a mixed gender, cross cultural class for those wishing to fine tune their English language skills. Particularly valued by international university students struggling to write in academic English, this popular class of over 20 people is conducted by qualified English teachers who generously volunteer their time.
Kids’ Drama and Performance

In this after school activity, children play games to develop their imagination, co-ordination and focus. This weekly activity has proved very popular, especially with the local CALD community and the participants enjoy the drama and the opportunity to play together and develop friendships. Parents dropping off and picking up their children have additionally embraced the opportunity to network with other parents and form friendships. This activity is facilitated by staff from the Police and Citizens’ Youth Club (PCyC) at Milton.

Kids’ Homework Club

The weekly Children’s Homework Club is a place for local school children to get support with homework activities which they may otherwise struggle with. Students predominantly speak English as a second language, so the time that goes into students is intensive as we spend time ensuring the child clearly understands what is being asked of them. The children of the community really look forward to their weekly support sessions, often commenting that Dad can’t help because he is busy with study and Mum is too busy with the other children and with running the home, and she speaks little English and thus is unable to help. The children actively practice social integration, due to the environment being very much that of a melting pot of cultures, personalities and traditions.

School Holiday Activities

The Exchange runs a successful school holiday program each term, with up to 25 participants for each activity. These include gardening and cooking workshops, circus skills, art and craft, nutrition workshops, and watching movies. The program also includes excursions to such locations as GOMA, Roma Street Parklands and Walk-About Creek. The emphasis is on activities that enhance children’s skills and confidence. Parents are encouraged to join in the fun, and many local friendships between children and between parents have begun during the school holiday program.

Urban Breakout!

Every Tuesday after school between 5-25 primary school aged children are meeting in McCaskie Park to have some fun after school. The afternoons are an initiative of the Police and Citizens’ Youth Club in Milton, and include drama games and sports activities. A favourite at the moment is red rover, with some of the parents joining in! In each school holiday period, a picnic is held for the whole family. Urban Breakout offers an opportunity for children to engage with positive recreational pursuits after school.
COMMUNITY LED INITIATIVES

Art Classes

Art classes have been running weekly since January 2010. The class size varies from 6-12 participants, and have covered topics such as drawing on the right side of the brain, watercolours, acrylics and sumie Japanese art. Several of the participants have come to the class with no previous experience in painting but with a strong desire to learn and to fulfill a passion they had always wanted to pursue.

Community Garden

The community of Kelvin Grove Village have come together to establish a community garden in Kundu Park. The garden is located right in the heart of Kelvin Grove Village which houses a large number of apartments meaning that access to land to garden is limited for residents. The community garden aims to offer residents the opportunity to get outside, be social and grow their own food. The first planting of vegetables and herbs have now flourished and garden group members are already eating the delicious fresh results of all their hard work. Support and funding for the garden has come from the Brisbane City Council, the Department of Communities and from the group’s own fundraising bric-a-brac stall at the Kelvin Grove Village Markets.

Community Group

The first meeting of the Community Group was in November 2009 and all residents in the community were invited to attend. The intention was for this group to have direct input into what programs should be run by/at The Exchange. The group continues to meet monthly and these meetings are now also used by the community to introduce new residents, develop networks, friendships, interest groups and for discussions around topics such as housing and parking issues. These discussions have led to members forming delegations to speak to State and Local Members.

Complimentary Theatre Tickets

The Exchange has successfully partnered with QUT Creative Industries to obtain complimentary theatre tickets to theatres at Kelvin Grove, Gardens Point and La Boite. It was agreed that from time to time a limited number of free tickets would be available for distribution through The Exchange. These tickets have enabled people on low incomes who would not otherwise access the arts through theatre to do so. All residents, volunteers and international students living in the Village are welcome to register with The Exchange to obtain these tickets.
**Dinner Club**

Communify have supported local residents to initiate a monthly dinner group. This social group encourages community members to budget for a group night out once a month, away from the Village. The group choose a restaurant, make a booking, organise transport to and from the restaurant. We have a fun group of approximately 12 people who attend. It has enabled residents to get to know each other better and enjoy a relaxing night out away from the confines of their units. The restaurants are selected for good quality food at reasonable prices to enable our pensioners to be able to attend. Restaurants the group have dined at include Lefkas Taverna in West End, The Brewhouse in Woolloongabba, and Bamboo Basket in South Brisbane.

**Winter Warmer**

At each Wednesday lunch-time throughout Winter, The Exchange hosted free lunches of delicious homemade soup and crusty bread. Local community members embraced this opportunity to share lunch with their neighbours and social connections were strengthened.

**Knitting Group**

The knitting group was started in response to a young Iranian woman’s request to become a volunteer for charity. She found the website for Save the Children and saw that they needed 15,000 blankets to distribute to children in India, Cambodia and Laos. She asked if The Exchange would start a knitting group. Each Tuesday between 1pm-3pm a small group of women from all over the world including Kuwait, Afghanistan, United Emirates, New Zealand, China, Iran and Australia sit around a ply wood table with their size 4 needles and 8 ply wool and knit, chat, laugh and share stories about their homelands. The women range in ages from 10 years to 10 years and take it in turns to bring afternoon tea.

**Social Table Tennis**

Communify in conjunction with Campus Living have sponsored social table tennis in the Kelvin Grove Village since March 2009. A local community member facilitates the group. Table tennis is played every Wednesday evening and every second Monday evening in the recreation room at Campus Living. This has been a popular outlet for local residents and students to mix socially and enjoy some exercise and camaraderie together. Catering for all standards of table tennis, this group welcomes people who may have physical or intellectual disabilities, supporting them to join in and make new friends. It has also been a welcoming activity for our international residents, particularly international students.

**Writers’ Group**

Facilitated by a published author, our writers’ group has provided a space for aspiring authors to share their personal stories, funny anecdotes and to polish their already impressive literary skills. Strong bonds have formed through this group as people have shared their inner worlds and often very personal thoughts and experiences. The group has a blog space and post examples of their exemplary work.

**Yoga & Meditation**

The Exchange has hosted two workshop series of Yoga & Meditation over the past 12 months. Well attended, these classes have given participants an opportunity to learn to relax, stretch their muscles and improve their postures.
**Aunties & Uncles**

Aunties & Uncles support families experiencing stress by mentoring and supporting children on weekends and school holidays. The Aunty or Uncle engages with the child in a variety of recreational activities, and establishes a warm, supportive relationship with the child. The Aunties & Uncles program utilises The Exchange venue on a monthly basis to hold information evenings.

**Brisbane Housing Company**

The Exchange provides a space for meetings between Brisbane Housing Company and their tenants regarding tenancy issues. This is a much utilised weekly service. In addition to having tenancy issues addressed, the service brings members of the community into The Exchange who may not have previously done so. In this way, a number of community members have engaged with the variety of programs and services on offer.

**Centrelink**

Each Monday morning, a Centrelink Community Engagement Officer attends The Exchange. They are available for any Centrelink related query. The community have utilised this service for issues such as updating addresses, arranging Centrepay deductions, applying for payments and applying for Health Care Cards. The target group for this service is those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

**Computer Courses**

The Exchange has hosted two Train the Trainer in computer literacy courses and one Introduction to Computers course from May-September 2011. The courses were part of the Work Ventures and IT settle program offered to members of refugee communities. Courses registered 8-12 people. Attendance was close to 100% every week of the three, five week courses. Women and men from six ethnic groups within the Sudanese community enthusiastically approached the learning and training tasks provided by the tutor Dean Potts.

The Exchange staff member Mandy Cox organised a meeting with Ian Pursehouse a volunteer with Engineers without Borders at the Exchange on 20 August with the course participants. This has resulted in a partnership with the bilingual trainers. Ian has offered to donate a number of reconditioned computers and co-facilitate introduction mornings when computers are delivered to refugee families who cannot afford a computer.

The feedback from the participants showed a high degree of satisfaction with the venue, flexibility with time (courses were conducted on Saturdays), the instruction and the free use of the computer hub. The bilingual trainers who graduated from the last course are now considering booking The Exchange to conduct computer training courses which they will conduct in English Arabic and other Sudanese languages.

**Cooking Classes**

The Exchange has partnered with the QUT School of Nutrition to run cooking classes. Held in the Campus Living Kitchen, and facilitated by nutrition students, the classes focus on cooking healthy and affordable meals. Most of the participants have been men living alone in the Village and the classes offer an opportunity not only for participants to learn valuable life skills, but also to connect with each other, form friendships and share the fruits of their labour in shared lunches.

**Eid Festival**

The Eid Festival celebrates the end of Ramadan in the Islamic faith. The Festival is held each year in Kelvin Grove Urban Village and is organised by the Saudi Arabia International students at QUT and Griffith Universities. The Exchange assists the organising committee and each year it gets bigger and better.

It’s a great opportunity for the wider community to experience the exotic Saudi culture, taste delicious foods and beverages as well as ask questions about their rituals and religion. It’s a very colourful event and while it’s the Saudi community that is being showcased, the EID attracts Muslims from all over...
Brisbane who take the opportunity to dress in their national robes. Each hour there are performances by the children and the men dance with elaborate swords. There are pony rides and a jumping castle for the children, and Henna artists on hand to decorate the ladies hands in the traditional way.

Men’s Group
This group offers men the opportunity to meet other men with similar issues, allowing men to share their personal journey, thoughts, reflections and views in a supportive and relaxed environment. This group has been meeting throughout 2011 and has a core group of participants.

Police & Citizens’ Youth Club
The partnership between The Exchange and the Police and Citizen’s Youth Club (PCYC) at Milton has proven of great value to families in the Urban Village. The PCYC currently run two after school activities for primary school age children in the local area. On Mondays, they facilitate a Drama and Performance workshop for children, and on Tuesdays an Urban Breakout sport and recreation afternoon in McCaskie Park. Both activities are extremely popular and very well received by local children and their parents. During each school holiday period, the PCYC additionally host picnics in the park for the whole family which has proven a popular activity and provided an opportunity for families to connect.

Tax Help
The Exchange has offered the services of a Tax Help Volunteer for the months following the end of the financial year. This trained volunteer can assist those with relatively simple tax affairs to prepare and lodge their tax returns. The service is free and has proven very valuable to the community.

Urban Village People’s Choir
The Urban Village People’s Choir is an all-ages community choir based in Kelvin Grove. Founded in February 2010 on a whim, the choir boasts 20 members, 2 previous gigs, 10 sweet songs and bucket loads of enthusiasm. They sing songs that aren’t traditionally sung in a choir setting (e.g., Blur, Fleet Foxes, Jeff Buckley, Madonna, Gorillaz), making their get-togethers unique, challenging, fun and awesome sounding. The members come from a variety of backgrounds and abilities (experienced to first time singing), making the choir a true community experience that values participation and loud noises.

Wellness Coaching
The QUT Human Movements and Exercise clinic have partnered with The Exchange to run a group wellness coaching series of workshops. This program focuses on determining current level of wellness, determining readiness for change, developing choices and strategies around health choices, increasing self-awareness, managing stress and setting achievable goals.
Addiction Group

This group is for people who have experienced addictions of any sort. Meeting weekly, the group has offered a non-judgmental space for people to share their journeys with each other and to gain support.

Chess & Other Board Games

This recreation group is new to The Exchange and proving to be a great success. Participants relax with others spending an enjoyable afternoon playing chess and other board games. The group gives an opportunity to break down social isolation and for friendships to form.

Computer Competency Class

The adult computer classes have proven to be of extreme value to the Kelvin Grove community. The class offers an outlet for community members to work on not only their technical skills but also their social skills as participants are often required to engage with one another, be it to help one another or to simply socialise. The focus at all classes is that participants arrive with a question and leave with an answer. Often parents, who are either single or stay at home parents attend the class with their child. Parents comment that the warm atmosphere and open door policy makes them feel incredibly welcome, knowing they will learn something and that their child is also welcome. The class supports individuals to learn at their own pace, to be better adjusted to society and modern times and helps individuals to increase their confidence in a world that is becoming more and more technical.

Internet Café, Library & Book Exchange

An internet café, library and book exchange operates Monday-Thursday. These are popular and are well utilised by the wider community, including international students. The café gives community members without access to computers at home the opportunity to utilise the net for purposes such as job hunting, education, research and maintaining contact with friends and family.

FRIENDS for Life

For primary-school aged children, FRIENDS for Life is an evidence-based program focusing on resilience and developing skills to cope with anxiety and the ups and downs of life. The children aged between 7-11 who attended came from Petrie Tce, Bardon and Kelvin Grove primary state schools and included children from 5 different cultural backgrounds. The Exchange has run this program successfully with 13 participants. The program not only gave the children skills and knowledge, it also provided an opportunity for them to spend quality time with other children, to play games and to develop friendships. The children attended five sessions during August and September. Each week parents were give a background reading sheet that outlined principles and activities for that week’s session and provided tips to encourage the practice of positive coping strategies.

No Interest Loans

The No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) is a micro-finance project providing interest-free loans to eligible people assisting them with the purchase of essential household goods and services, or medical equipment. Community members have greatly benefited from access to this scheme, with essential items purchased including fridges and washing machines.
Quit Smoking

Five community members attended an 8 week course based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). The participants learnt about the pharmacological effects of smoking, the benefits of not smoking, Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT), mindfulness meditation, nutrition and became more aware of their own psychological reasons to smoke or quit and their triggers.

Reading Well Group

This group enables individuals to share their personal journeys as prompted by poetry, literature or texts they are reading. “Wherever I go, I find a poet has been there before me” – Freud.

Triple P

Eight community members participated in learning more about childhood development, attachment theory, strategies for managing misbehaviour, the importance of praise and acceptance. The participants self-efficacy increased and they became more aware of their own behaviour and how this had a positive or negative impact on their children.

Venue Hire

Venue Hire at The Exchange is predominantly Community associated groups and Community run activities. We have the local Village Church hiring the hall for Choir practice and English Language Classes are offered several times a week. Privately the space is hired out by a Psychotherapist who is open to members of the Community to attend as well as Community Training Workshops for multi-cultural groups. Another successful group is the Womens only Narcotics Anonymous group and we also have the local Muslim community using the space for cultural events. The space also gets used for free meditation, training days, and the meeting rooms for business associations and counselling.

Welfare Services

Monday-Thursday there is a welfare officer based at The Exchange to assist individuals and families with their specific needs. Information, referral and advocacy support is provided for people with difficult and stressful life experiences. Issues have included homelessness, financial hardship, relationship breakdown, substance abuse, mental health and cross-cultural issues.
Rebecca Ramsey  
Queensland University of Technology  
School of Public Health  
Victoria Park Avenue  
Kelvin Grove, 4059

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my support and appreciation for the work undertaken by the Exchange at Kelvin Grove (a part of Communify). The discipline of Nutrition and Dietetics, in the School of Public Health, Queensland University of Technology, have been working in conjunction with the Exchange to provide quality programs aimed at improving the health of local culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups.

For many reasons, individuals belonging to CALD groups have lower incomes, difficulties in accessing culturally-appropriate, healthy foods and health services and are consequently more likely to experience poorer health outcomes. The many services offered by the Exchange assist in improving the equity of food and health service access to ultimately address the inequalities in health experienced by these groups. The programs offered through the Exchange are provided free of charge, or for a very low cost. As such, these programs are easily, and readily accessed and provide invaluable benefits to participants.

Furthermore, the Exchange have provided QUT with an opportunity for joint collaboration, through which our Nutrition and Public Health students are able to gain experience through practical placements that assist Exchange staff in the development of evidence-based Nutrition and/or health programs to be provided to Exchange clients. Whilst this process further assists in reducing the health inequalities of CALD groups accessing the Exchange, it also ensures that the new graduates from our Nutrition and Public Health programs are confident and capable upon graduation; as such, the Exchange is also providing us here at QUT with an invaluable service.

I strongly support the work undertaken through the Exchange at Kelvin Grove. Should their services cease to continue it would be of great detriment to the large CALD group living in Kelvin Grove and surrounding areas.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Ramsey APD  
Lecturer – Nutrition & Dietetics  
Queensland University of Technology  
Ph: 3138 5806  
E: rebecca.ramsey@qut.edu.au
12/10/11

The Exchange- Communities, Kelvin Grove Urban Village

To whom it may concern,

QUT Health Clinics and The Exchange have collaborated in community focused activities this year that have lead to opportunities to increase student learning and enhance the health education of the local community.

The support and involvement of The Exchange in these initiatives has been invaluable and the participants involved benefitted from the experience.

We look forward to more opportunities to work together on healthy initiatives for the community in 2012 and beyond.

I can be contacted on 07 3138 8946 to discuss further,

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Allison Vauth
QUT Health Clinics Manager
LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Kelvin Grove Campus Living Village
62 Blamey St
Kelvin Grove, QLD, 4059
13/10/11

Re: Letter of Support for The Exchange

To whom it may concern:

I am Daniel Brennan, the Events Manager at Kelvin Grove Campus Living Village, a student accommodation provider. I am writing to express my full support for the continuation for The Exchange and its operations which contribute greatly to the sense of community at Kelvin Grove.

We work closely with The Exchange on a number of events and have found that their openness and activities create a true sense of community and engagement around Kelvin Grove. The Exchange presently operates a Ping Pong Tournament, Women’s English Language Classes (delivered through a cooking class), as well as a Cooking on a Budget Class through our facilities, all of which are weekly events. These events are attended by residents of the Kelvin Grove Community and we are more than happy to continue offering the free use of our facilities for the exchange to continue their great work.

I urge you to continue to assist and fund the operations of The Exchange throughout 2011, 2012 and beyond.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Brennan
Residential Life Manager
Kelvin Grove Campus Living Village
07 3839 3733
LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Queensland Police - Citizens Youth Welfare Association
A.B.N. 58 009 046 155
All correspondence to be directed to:
Branch Manager
LANG PARK PCYC
PO BOX 52 PADDINGTON 4064
Suncorp Stadium, Castlemaine Street, Milton 4064
Telephone: (07)33692647 | Facsimile: (07)33696693
Email: info@langpark.pyc.org.au

25 October 2011

To Whom it May Concern

I am writing to express the Lang Park PCYC’s full support for the continuation of funding for The Exchange and its operations that support and nurture the residents of the Kelvin Grove Village community.

Lang Park PCYC Youth Development team works in partnership with The Exchange to deliver three activities for young people and their families: Drama Games & Performance for Kids, Urban Break-Out, and Holiday Activities including Picnics in the Park, Drama, Arts and Craft.

This partnership was formed to meet the need for free or low cost recreation activities for young people and their families. This need was identified by The Exchange and police personnel who were supporting the Kelvin Grove Village Brisbane Housing apartment residents. The above mentioned activities are always over full and are attended by a diverse range of children from local residents and international student families. This popularity further demonstrates the continuing needs of the Kelvin Grove Village.

The Exchange was created to service the rapidly developed, high density, cultural diverse community of Kelvin Grove Village and the work being done by the centre is really making a difference. Without a community centre Kelvin Grove Village residents will suffer a loss of services and the community itself will be less connected and therefore less safe. The International students and their families, that are so important to the QUT economy, will not be supported adequately. Thus it is very important that The Exchange continue to be funded so that the services and relationships that the centre has created and creates can continue to grow.

If you need more information about the collaborative work that Lang Park PCYC and The Exchange do, please call me on 3309 2647.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Clare Astell
Youth Development Coordinator
Lang Park PCYC
LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Brisbane Housing Company Ltd

To: Whom it may concern

20 October 2011

Re: Communify – The Exchange, Kelvin Grove

Brisbane Housing Company (BHC) currently operates a weekly advice session from the Exchange for its tenants in Kelvin Grove and is grateful to Communify staff for facilitating this work.

The sessions have proven to be a valuable service and, through its communication with tenants, BHC recognises the positive contribution that Communify are providing for residents and the wider community at the facility.

BHC continues to look at opportunities to work collaboratively with all support agencies to sustain tenancies and address homelessness and supports Communify in their endeavours to secure funding for the future continuation of the service.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Andy Denniss
Operations Controller

Brisbane Housing Company Limited
ACN 107 263 354
GPO Box 544
Brisbane Qld 4001
Level 1, 35 Aster Terrace
Spring Hill  Qld 4000

Phone: (07) 3307 3000  Fax: (07) 3839 2000  Web: www.brisbanehousingcompany.com.au
LETTER FROM ROYA ...

It was the 8th February 2011 when we arrived in Australia and rented an apartment in Kelvin Grove. One morning my daughter Mahya and I went shopping at Woolworths where we met other women dressed like us with scarfs on their heads. We said hello and one of them spoke better English than the others. She told us ‘we are just coming from the women’s English class just around the corner’ and she took us to The Exchange. She gave us a flyer with the information about all the programs running at The Exchange.

The next Tuesday we went to the women’s English class and this was the first time I met Shannon and she introduced me to Cait. She was so kind and she asked me about myself and my family and after that she always recognised me whenever she saw me. During the eight months my family and I were living in Kelvin Grove I really enjoyed the classes with Catherine and the once a month cooking classes were fun also.

Recently Cait started a knitting group where we knitted squares for blankets for Save the Children to send to children in Africa.

Cait also introduced me to Denise in the program Lets Get Talking Kelvin Grove. Denise took me shopping and to many tourist places around Brisbane. We even went to her home and met some of her friends and I learnt Australian customs. This was the first time I had ever been into an Australian home in Brisbane. I am so happy to have met dear Cait.

I think I improved my English in the 8 months we were visiting The Exchange and I am so pleased with all the staff and loved all the programs I attended.

Thank you for everything and I hope The Exchange will go on for a long time so people can continue to use it. I’ll never forget my teachers and my friends at The Exchange.

Regards

Roya Rahimzadeh (Sept 2011)

Roya is from Iran. She and was in Kelvin Grove with her husband, son and daughter to settle her son, who is doing his Masters in Architecture at QUT, into university life. (Sabbatical.)

LETTER FROM ANTOINETTE ...

When access to the Hub ended several years ago, many of the residents of our Village looked forward to such time as Communify would open here. It was a long wait; but definitely very much worth the wait. Now there are many activities in which our residents can participate such as writing, art, computer lessons, and activities to help our school children after school hours. We also have an extensive library that we can use for free and the only rule is that if you want to keep a book we have to replace it with another.

The most rewarding part of being involved in the activities at The Exchange is the making of new friendships. Not only with the Aussie residents but also meeting friendly people from overseas and learning about their lifestyles and cooking etc.

There is no need to feel alone or shut-in as some older people do in other places after some of their life-long friends have passed away. Always remember that when The Exchange is open you are welcome to call in for a cuppa or chat or join some activity.

Knitters are welcome on Tuesday afternoons. At present the knitters are busy making squares to make into blankets for Save the Children. I am sure than when this campaign ends some other charity will benefit because there will always be someone who needs assistance and our Exchange will be there to help.

Regards

Antoinette

Antoinette is 87 years young and has lived in Kelvin Grove for over 40 years.
LETTER FROM BEHDAD ...

What a small community like 'Exchange' brought to me

When my wife and I first came to Australia, I was working all by myself at home. Being a software engineer whose only need is a computer and internet connection, I thought I wouldn’t face any problem living and working like this. But after only one month I started to feel alone, bored and I missed social contact. I decided to look for some English classes, at which point I was introduced to The Exchange by a friend. I dare saying that this happened to be a very special point in my life.

At first I was just looking at improving my English skills, but when I started attending English classes at “The Exchange” I saw what a big difference this small community made in my personal and social life. It wasn’t just about their English classes. In actuality I got to meet so many people from different nationalities and cultures all in one place. It was like being on a tour all around the world, from Asia to Europe to Africa and some times to America. I started to meet and find new friends from everywhere. The Exchange gave me the opportunity to socialise with volunteer and local community members willing to help those of us from different countries, by introducing and arranging meetings between Australians and overseas people, both to mix up the cultures and help people like me improve their English. Through this I met a nice middle aged Australian guy, with whom we went to so many places in the city and around, chatting and having fun and most importantly knowing the lifestyle in Brisbane. Generally speaking my lonely work space at home turned out to be quite social once I was introduced to “The Exchange”.

Fortunately, they were also holding some sport sessions like table tennis. By attending those social tennis sessions I found more and more friends and also started a regular physical exercise program, which I had never experienced in my life, even in my own country. Now after a year I am a very good table tennis and tennis player, thanks to “The Exchange” and lovely people of Australia. These physical activities had great impacts on my spirit, attitude and generally turned my steady-state life into an active social life.

I have also had the wonderful experience of volunteering at “The Exchange”, by supporting Bronwyn Tutty in taking the Adult Community Computer weekly classes. This allowed me to use experiences I am specialised in to help the local community members to feel more comfortable using computers. I also had the great opportunity of working in a volunteer role with Bronwyn Tutty to develop a software application to manage some of the Community data. This application is not yet complete but we are working on it.

Honestly, the greatest thing that happened to me by coming to Australia was connecting with “The Exchange”, it has provided me with great opportunities, social networks, learning outlets and a reason to leave my home and my computer!

So in a word, I can summarise that “I owe this small community A LOT” and if the success I had in my job continues as it is then I would say I owe Exchange A LIFE”.

Thanks,

Behdad

To Whom It May Concern,

I consider the Exchange at Kelvin Grove to be a great service because they have helped me so much. I suffer severe cases of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Panic Attacks and Depression. The Exchange has helped me with the great classes they have in place, and also the fact that they genuinely care about people.

The classes I am doing include: Cooking Class which I enjoy, Men’s Shed at Spring Hill where we are taught woodworking skills and make pushbikes for underprivileged children, Men’s Group on Fridays, a Self-Defence and Fitness Instructor on Tuesdays which is giving me a lot of confidence, and a Computer Class which is another positive interest for me.

Without the Exchange I would go backwards instead of forwards.
TESTIMONIALS

LETTER FROM MICHAEL ...

Interaction with The Exchange

To Mandy,

I have found working at The Exchange and working with the people of The Exchange a very enjoyable experience. I like meeting all the friendly people who come into the office every week and have a chat and figure out the problems they are having with their computers at home, plus its also good just to meet people and have a casual chat when you can as well. I like the fact that people are so open and friendly when they come in and I feel I can build a good rapport with them and it has really built my self confidence being able to build that bond between me and the learner which I think is important. I think it’s great that we can readily provide people who don’t usually have easy access to a computer a place where they can sit down with a computer for the time needed and if they need help there is someone on hand to sort out the required problems. I think Bronwyn and Shannon have been really friendly and helpful and really try to make sure you are getting the most out of the experiences you are having with The Exchange. And I think the smile that you are given when you have given someone a helping hand is a great reward for the experience I am having at The Exchange.

Kind Regards,

Michael

LETTER FROM CARL ...

To: Mandy Cox
Subject: The Exchange

Hallo,

Just a few words to say how much I appreciate the services offered at The Exchange in Kelvin Grove.

I avail myself of a computer tutorial on a weekly basis and am aware of the wide range of other programs offered at little or no facilities are more than adequate and the staff is friendly and helpful.

Hopefully the organisation will be deemed worthy to receive future funding as it appears to play a significant role in the local community.

Yours,

Carl Martens (Sept 2011)